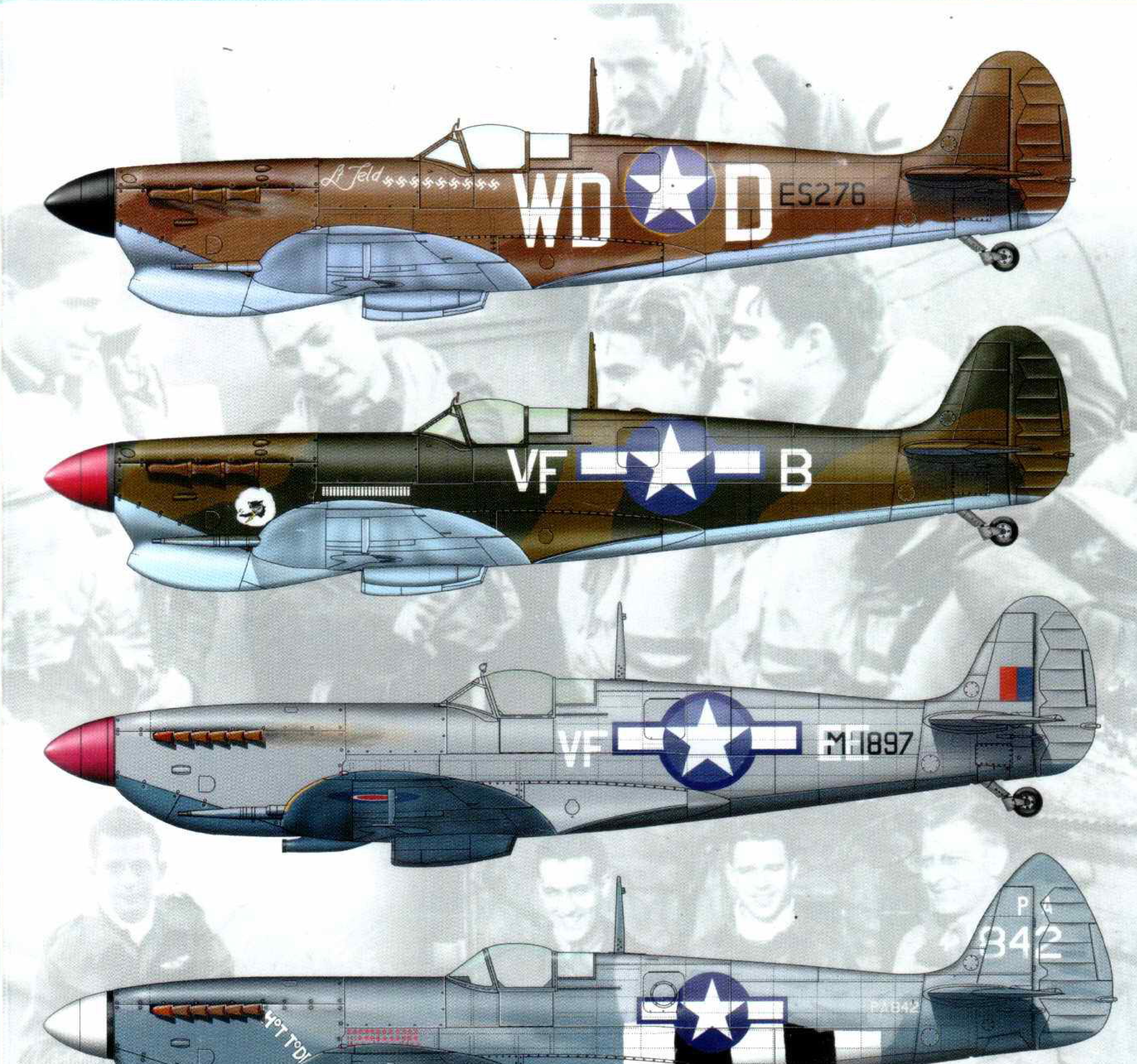
Ventura
PUBLICATIONS

American SPITFIRE CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKINGS

PART 2


WD
D
ES276
VF
B
VF
MH897
842
PA842

Classic Warbird Series No 4

- PAUL LUDWIG & MALCOLM LAIRD -

American SPITFIRE

CAMOUFLAGE & MARKINGS

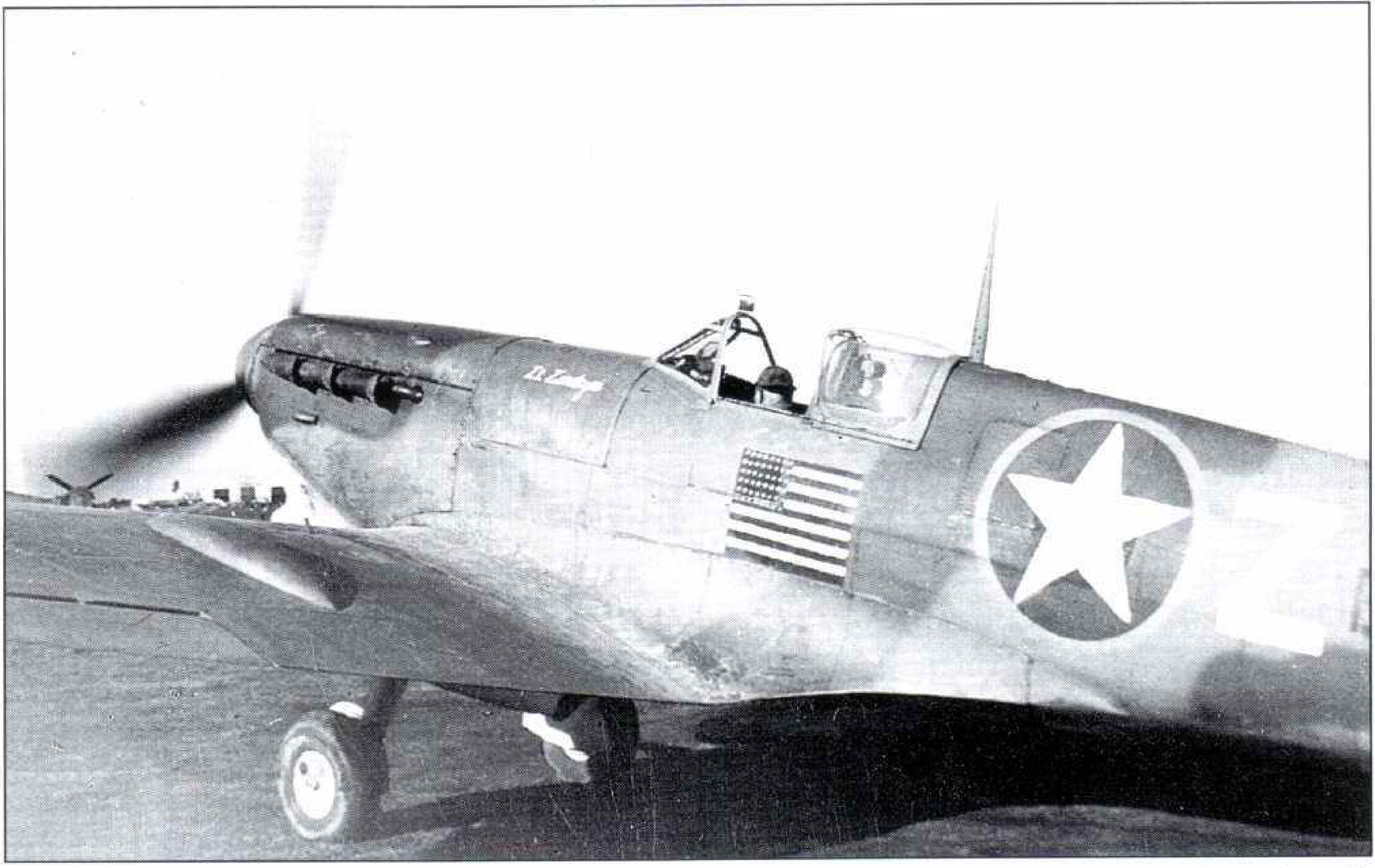
PART 2

By

Paul Ludwig and Malcolm Laird

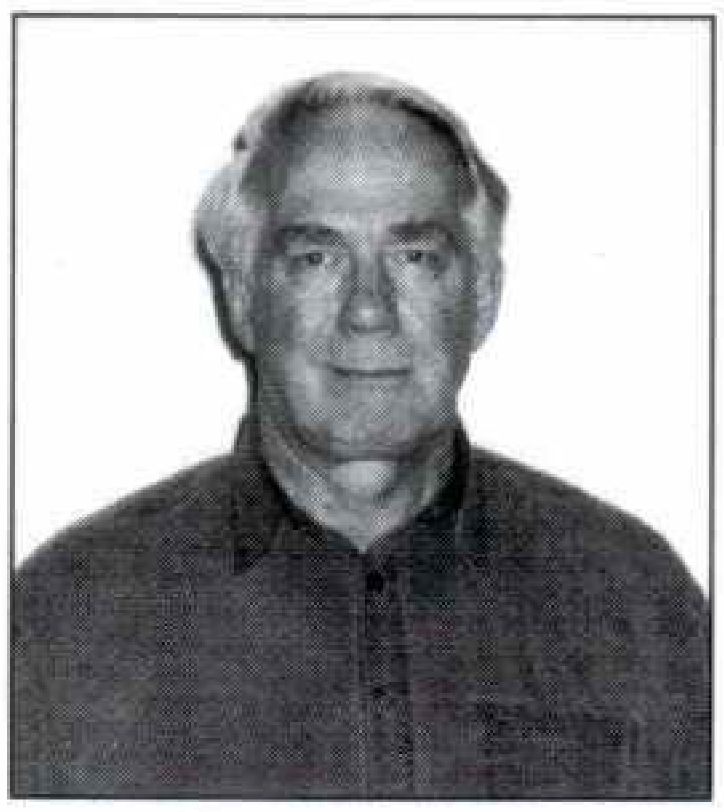
- Illustrated by Malcolm Laird -

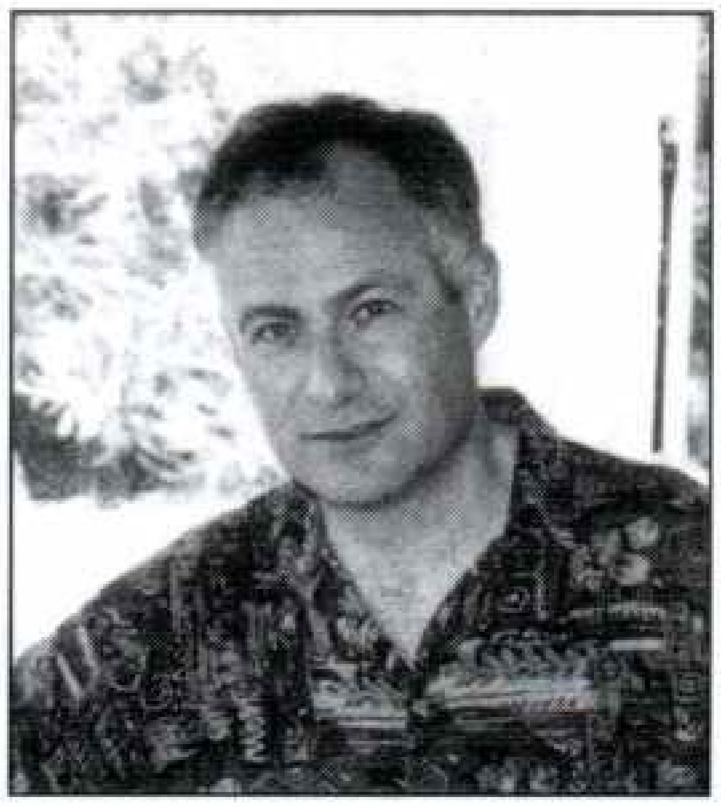
A 52nd FG Spitfire in North Africa..



The Spitfire Mk Vc flown by Lieutenant Luis Zendegui, being run-up by a mechanic. This aircraft had only the code letter 'Z' in the early part of the North African campaign, with the 2nd FS codes 'QP' being added later. Note the American flag decal, yellow surround to the cocarde and residual 'shadow' of the RAF roundel. Zendegui's final score was three destroyed. (Cogal)

No. 4 in the Classic Warbirds series


Paul Ludwig


Malcolm Laird

'American Spitfire – Camouflage and Markings Part 2' is the fourth book in the Classic Warbirds Series. It continues the story of the colours and markings worn by the 600 plus Spitfires operated by the USAAF and US Navy. This is still very much a living subject, with new material coming to hand continually. Please visit our internet site listed below, for additional material relevant to the books already published and about forthcoming titles.

Paul Ludwig is retired and now lives in Seattle, Washington. He plans to publish a major work on fighter escort doctrine in the USAAF, in the future. Paul and I both offer our great appreciation to the retired USAAF members who helped Paul with interviews and allowed their photo collections to be reproduced here. Special thanks must also go to Mrs Patricia Keen, author of "Eyes of the Eighth" the definitive history of the 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group, for her generous help with the chapter on the 7th PG. Appendix 4 was drafted by Mr Wojtek Matusiak and we thank him for this and his critique of the manuscript. Thanks also to Mr David Frowen and Mr Rex Barker for their proof reading work.

Malcolm Laird
Malcolm J Laird

Paul A Ludwig
Paul A Ludwig

Authors.. Paul Ludwig & Malcolm Laird
Colour Illustrations.. Malcolm Laird
Page design.. Judy Laird
Published by Ventura Publishing
P.O. Box 10-213,
Wellington, New Zealand
Phone +64(4)385 8189 Fax +64(4)934 3047
E-mail: ventura@e-zine.co.nz
Web: www.e-zine.co.nz

Paul A. Ludwig
P.O. Box 15670
Seattle, WA 98115-0670
Paul A. Ludwig copyright 1999
phone (206) 526-9963
fax (206) 523-8711
e-mail: jludwig247@aol.com

Classic Warbirds Series No 4
American Spitfire - Camouflage & Markings Part 2
Ventura product number CW0804

ISBN 0-9583594-4-X

© Paul Ludwig and Malcolm Laird. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, internet, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publishers.

FRONT COVER COLOUR ILLUSTRATIONS..

- 1st Lieutenant Sid Feld's Spitfire Mk Vb, 4th FS, June 1943, showing his total of nine victories.
- A Spitfire Mk Vb (trop) of the 5th FS, 1943, wearing a low contrast re-paint scheme.
- An ex-RAF Spitfire Mk IX of the 5th FS, 1944, still with the 12" square red & blue fin flash from a previous RAF squadron. NB. True serial number is unknown.
- 'Hot Toddy', a Spitfire PR Mk XI of the 14th PS with partly removed invasion stripes.
- Background collage; top image shows Flying Officer W.J. Daley using his hands to explain what occurred in a dog-fight. Bottom left is Sid Feld. Bottom right are roommates at Debden, from the left; Captain Don Gentile, Major Carl H. Miley and Captain Ervin Miller, of the 336th FS.

INTRODUCTION

This, the second part of 'American Spitfire – Camouflage and Markings' briefly covers the Eagle Squadrons with their standard RAF camouflage and markings. It leads on to the 4th Fighter Group and then the 52nd Fighter Group which, like the 31st FG covered in Part I, operated Spitfires in a variety of colour schemes over a two year period. While the Group initially retained RAF camouflage with added American National insignia; by the time they were in Italy a variety of low and high altitude schemes were in evidence. Add to this the Group's squadron badges and distinct style of marking a pilots name on an aircraft and you have some of the most varied Spitfire colour schemes of the Second World War.

The 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group, with its *PRU Blue* Spitfire PR Mk XIs and the 67th RG are then covered, with many previously unpublished photographs. Mention is also made of evaluation aircraft used by the US Navy and USAAF.

Throughout the book the phrase 'nominal diameter' is used when discussing the size of USAAF national insignia. This refers to the diameter of the white-star-on-blue-disc portion of the insignia, excluding any yellow, red or blue outer border.

CONTENTS

The 4th Fighter Group 4
The 52nd Fighter Group 10
  North Africa 12
  Sicily 31
  Corsica 35
  Italy 42
United States Navy Evaluation Seafire 47
The 67th Reconnaissance Group 49
The 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group 59

Appendices..

Appendix 1. Camouflage Colours 70
Appendix 2. 52nd FG Combat victories on Spitfires 70
Appendix 3. Bibliography 70
Appendix 4. Spitfire Colour schemes in the MTO 71

USAAF publicists, along with the civilian press, gave extensive coverage to the new 4th FG (Fighter Group) and its Spitfires, when it was created in England late September 1942. No other USAAF Fighter Group became so strongly identified with the Spitfire. The reason being that in October 1942, the 4th FG became the first combat-operational Fighter Group in the Eighth Air Force which was the only U.S. military force in England. All other USAAF Fighter Groups based in England in 1942 had been transferred to the 12th AF in North Africa that same month. Not until March 1943 would another 8th AF Fighter Group become operational.

The 4th FG achieved early fame in America's premiere photographic journal of the day, 'Life', flying Spitfires. However it operated them for just six months and began transitioning to the new Republic P-47 Thunderbolt after three and a half months. Compared to the 31st and 52nd FGs who operated Spitfires for two years, the 4th FG created no significant military history flying the type.

Of the fewer than three dozen American volunteer pilots in the RAF who fought in the Battle of France, six eventually found their way to England and were inducted into 71 Squadron RAF, the first Eagle Squadron, in September 1940.

One volunteer, Bill Dunn was America's first Second World War Ace, downing his fourth and fifth victims on 27 August 1941, while in RAF uniform. A colour illustration of a Spitfire Mk II flown by Dunn appears on page 33. In November two other Americans, Chesley Peterson and Gregory Daymond also became Aces. Peterson was promoted to command 71 Squadron, RAF, in late 1941 and his leadership qualities were such that he eventually became a two-star General in the USAF.

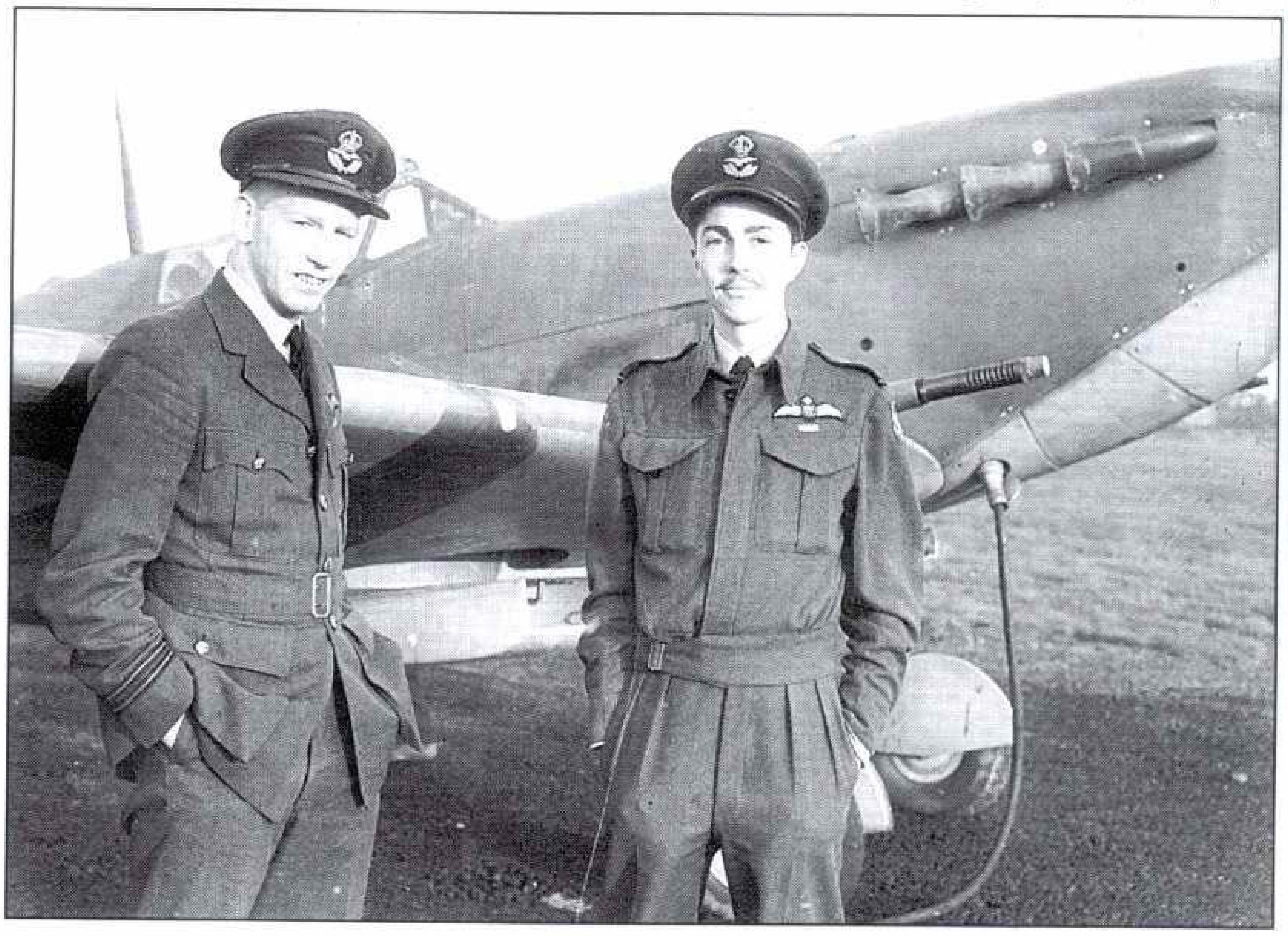
Although U.S. law prohibited Americans from fighting in foreign uniform, a steady stream joined the RAF and a second Eagle Squadron, 121, was formed in May 1941. It became operational in July and a third, 133, was formed in August. The 4th FG was formed by transferring the three American-manned squadrons to the USAAF.

New American pilots who had initially joined the Royal Canadian Air Force transferred to the Eagle Squadrons. One was Don Blakeslee, who was later the heart and soul of the 4th FG. Blakeslee became a triple-Ace, Group C.O. (Commanding Officer) and a Colonel by the end of his tour in 1944. Another, Don Gentile, had two victories in Spitfires before becoming a famous Ace on P-47s and P-51s. During August 1941, 71 Squadron received new Spitfire IIas, with 121 and 133 Squadrons receiving them in October. Shortly after this 133 Squadron re-equipped with the Mk VA.

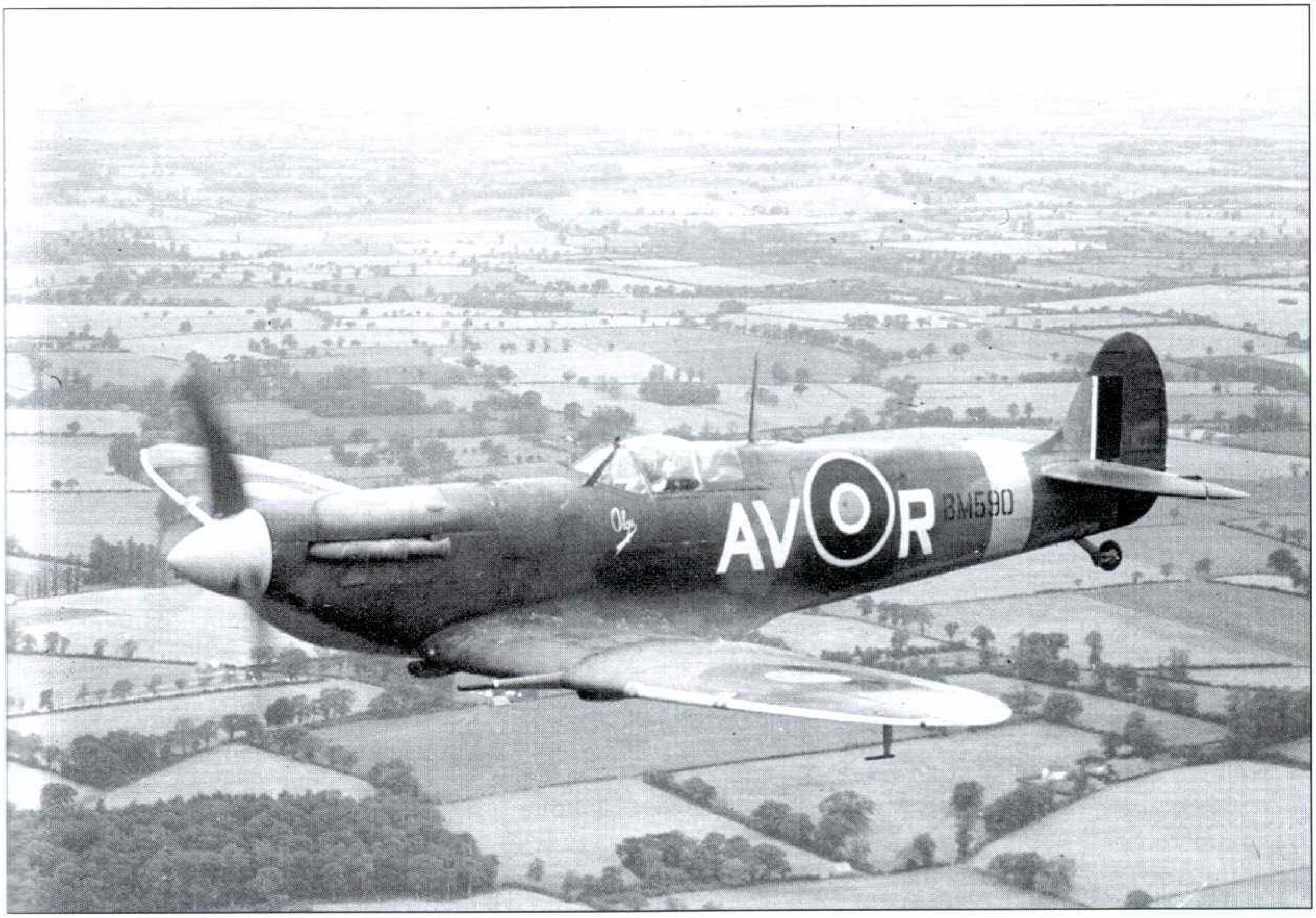
SUMMER 1942

Just over a month before the three Eagle squadrons were inducted into the USAAF, they were part of the air cover for the disastrous Dieppe Raid on 19 August, 1942. Of seventy-six squadrons flying that day, three were the Eagles. Flight

Sergeant Pilot Jack Evans of 71 (Eagle) Squadron. He was killed in action on 27 August 1942. (Via P Barnett)



Flight Lieutenant Chesley Peterson, left, and Flying Officer Gregory Daymond of 71 Squadron were based at North Weald on 10 October 1941, when they were awarded DFC's. Daymond left the 4th FG early in March 1943, while Peterson served with the Group longer. Note the starter trolley lead plugged into the engine and the dark coloured strips extending back under the wings from the machine gun ports (IWM)



Spitfire Mk Vb, BM590, of 121 Eagle Squadron, flying over the English countryside, September 1942. When the Eagles became the 4th FG, the code letters 'AV' were carried over into the 335th FS. (via P Ludwig)

Lieutenant Donald Blakeslee was Acting Squadron C.O. of 133 Squadron and shot down an Fw 190. He was the only Eagle Squadron C.O. to lead all four sorties of his squadron that day.

Six weeks after Dieppe, the ceremony of transferring the Eagle Squadrons into the USAAF was scheduled to take place at RAF Debden, Essex. The handover was to be a star-studded affair with appearances by some of the USAAF's and RAF's 'top brass'. However before the change of command, the Eagles suffered a terrible disaster.

Captain Don Willis is shown in his 335th FS Spitfire. RAF assigned code letters were retained on 4th FG Spitfires. (USAF)

DISASTER OVER MORLAIX

In August 1942, Britain honoured its American volunteers in 133 Sqn. by re-equipping them with the latest Spitfire Mk IX, a match for the Luftwaffe's new Focke Wulf Fw 190. They were one of the first three RAF squadrons to operate Mark IXs.

Eighth Air Force B-17s were scheduled to bomb a target near the French town of Morlaix soon after 7 September – as soon as bad weather delaying the mission abated.

At that time the Eagle squadrons were in the process of having pilots go to London, in groups of three, to complete the routine paperwork of joining the USAAF. 133 Squadron were on stand by to escort the B-17s to Morlaix. American Flight Lieutenant Carroll McColpin of 133 Squadron had become Acting Squadron Leader and he dearly wanted to lead the squadron when the call came. As fate would have it on the day of the mission, 26 September, he was in London transferring into the USAAF. In his place a junior British officer, Flight Lieutenant E.G. Brettell, led the Morlaix mission. The call came and 133 Squadron took off with its new Spitfire IXs. The weather briefing stated that at 28,000 feet, where the squadron was to fly, there was to be a 35 knot tailwind. Later estimates put the tailwind at over 100 knots! Brettell unwittingly led 133 Squadron too deep into France. When they arrived at what he estimated to be their rendezvous point with the bombers, there was nothing in sight. Brettell turned the Squadron for home after approximately two hours in the air. He saw land through a hole in the clouds and descended, but the squadron found itself over German anti-aircraft artillery in France and within a few short minutes twelve pilots and their new Spitfire IXs were shot down.

The Eagle Squadrons' transfer to the USAAF took place at RAF Debden on 29 September. RAF Squadrons 71, 121 and 133 became, the 334th, 335th and 336th Fighter Squadrons, respectively, of the 4th FG. These Squadrons were never re-equipped with Spitfire IXs.

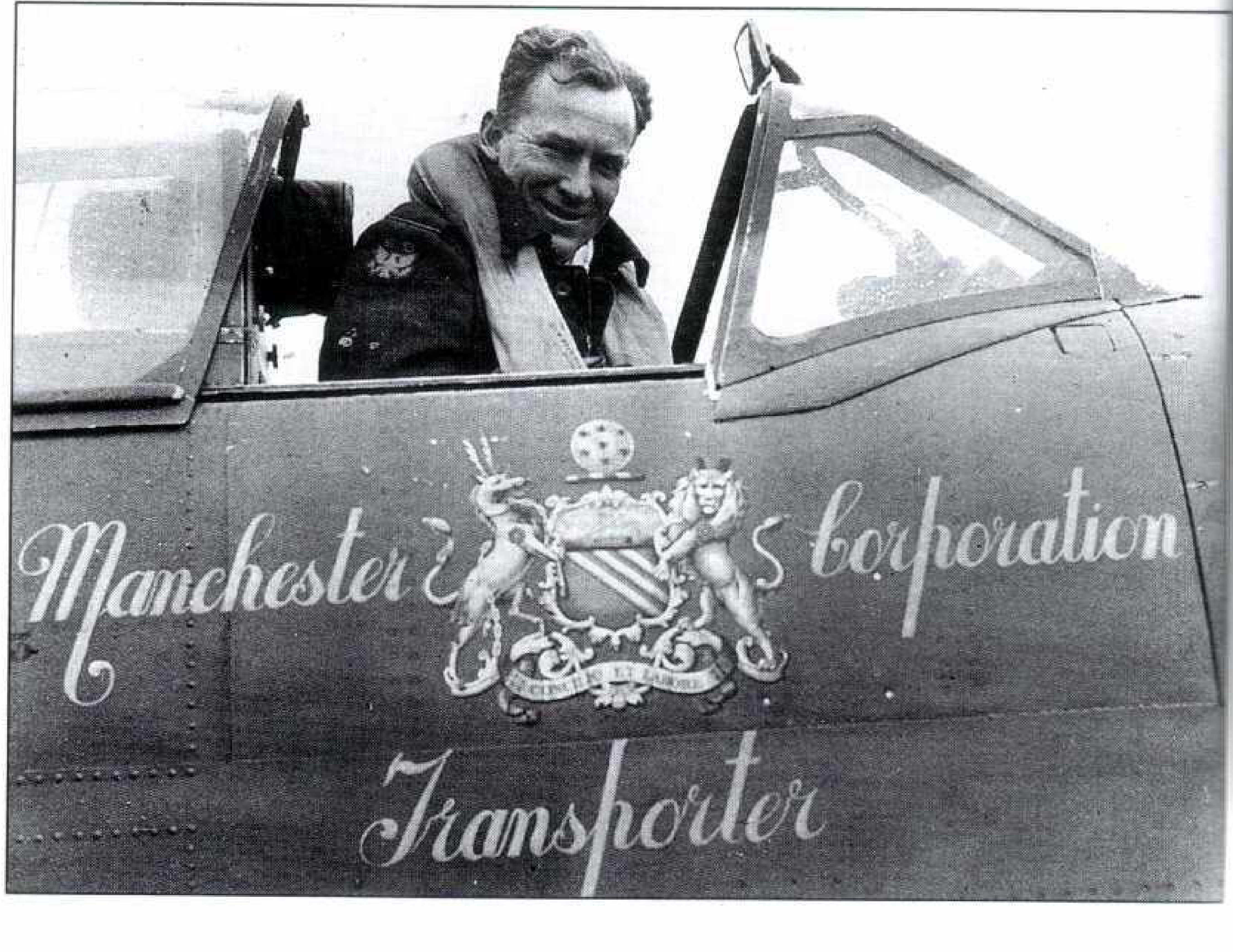
Flight Lieutenant Carroll Warren McColpin was acting Commanding Officer of 133 Squadron, on the fateful day of the Morlaix raid. However, he was off-base transferring to the USAAF on 26 September 1942 and did not lead the mission. McColpin was with the 4th FG only until 22 November, 1942. This photo was taken at North Weald on 9 November 1941, when he held the rank of Pilot Officer. (IWM)

CAMOUFLAGE AND NATIONAL INSIGNIA

All Spitfires operated by the 4th FG were in the RAF Day Fighter Scheme of *Dark Green and Ocean Grey* upper surfaces with *Sky* undersurfaces. (see Appendix 4)

After the Group was formed out of the three Eagle Squadrons the RAF roundels were replaced with USAAF white star on blue disc cocardes. USAAF cocardes were specified as being a minimum of 20" in diameter with increases in size, as required, by 5" steps. The 30" size (plus 2" yellow ring where carried) best suited the Spitfire fuselage. In the 4th FG, 50" upperwing cocardes appear most common in photographs sighted by the authors, and for the underwing insignia, the RAF 32" type 'C' roundels were frequently modified to 32" cocardes on the starboard side and painted out on the port

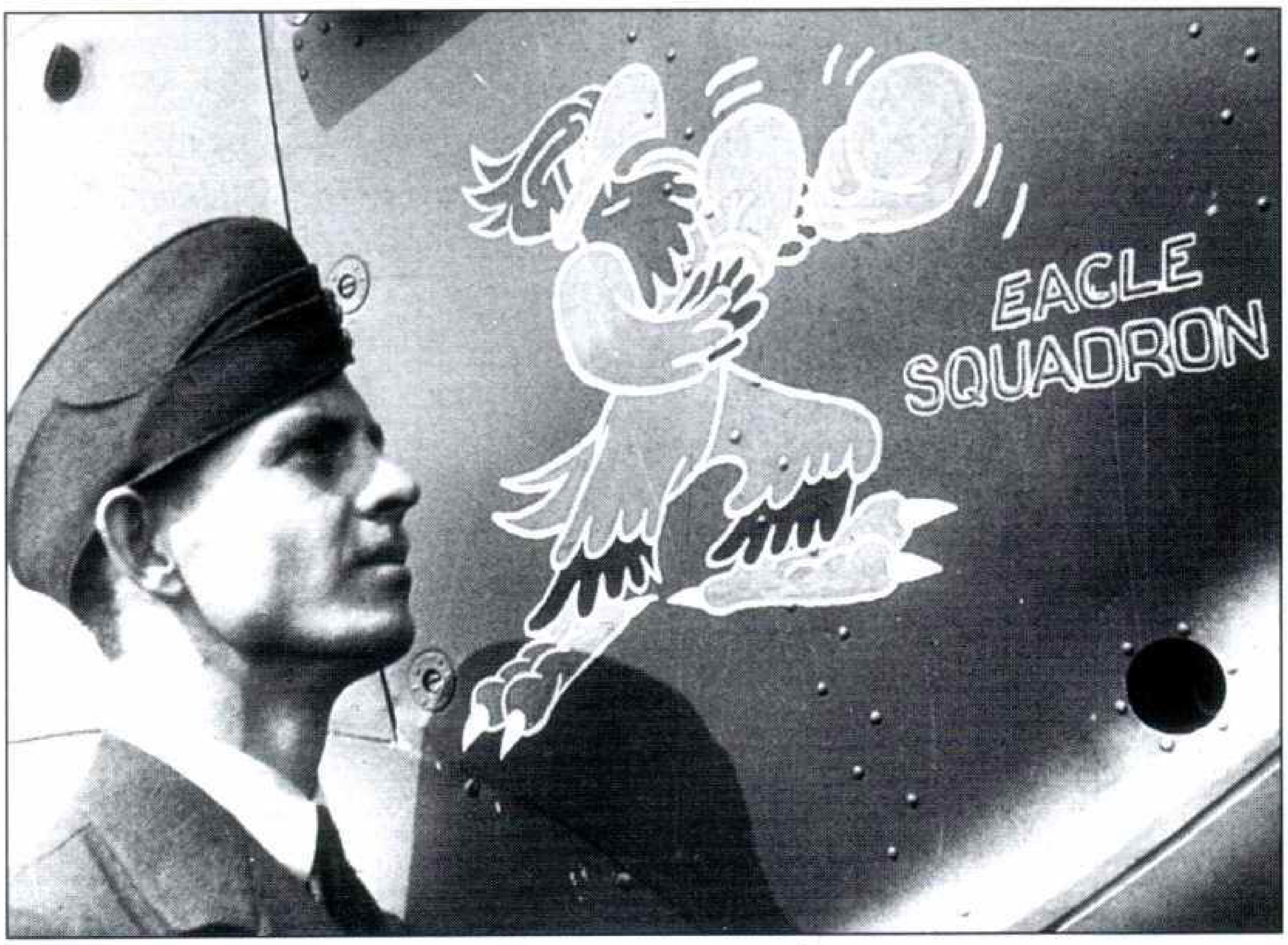
Pilot Officer Harold Strickland of 71 Squadron posed in his Presentation Spitfire Mk VB AA881, 'Manchester Corporation Transporter'. (IWM)



side. However, some examples of the more correct 30" size have been recorded. It does not pay to take a one-size-fits-all approach to describing USAAF Spitfire cocardes, as they were field applied and did vary in size.

SQUADRON CODES AND THEATRE MARKINGS

Spitfire Mk Vs in the 4th FG retained RAF assigned code letters until the Republic P-47 Thunderbolt was introduced. 71, 121 and 133 RAF Squadrons became the 334th, 335th and 336th Fighter Squadrons, coded 'XR', 'AV' and 'MD'. These were painted in 24" high *Sky* letters, although white became more common as aircraft were repaired and re-marked in USAAF service. The 4th FG followed RAF practice and squadron code letter pairs were forward of the fuselage cocarde on the port side and to the rear on the starboard. Individual aircraft code letters were applied on the other side of the cocarde.

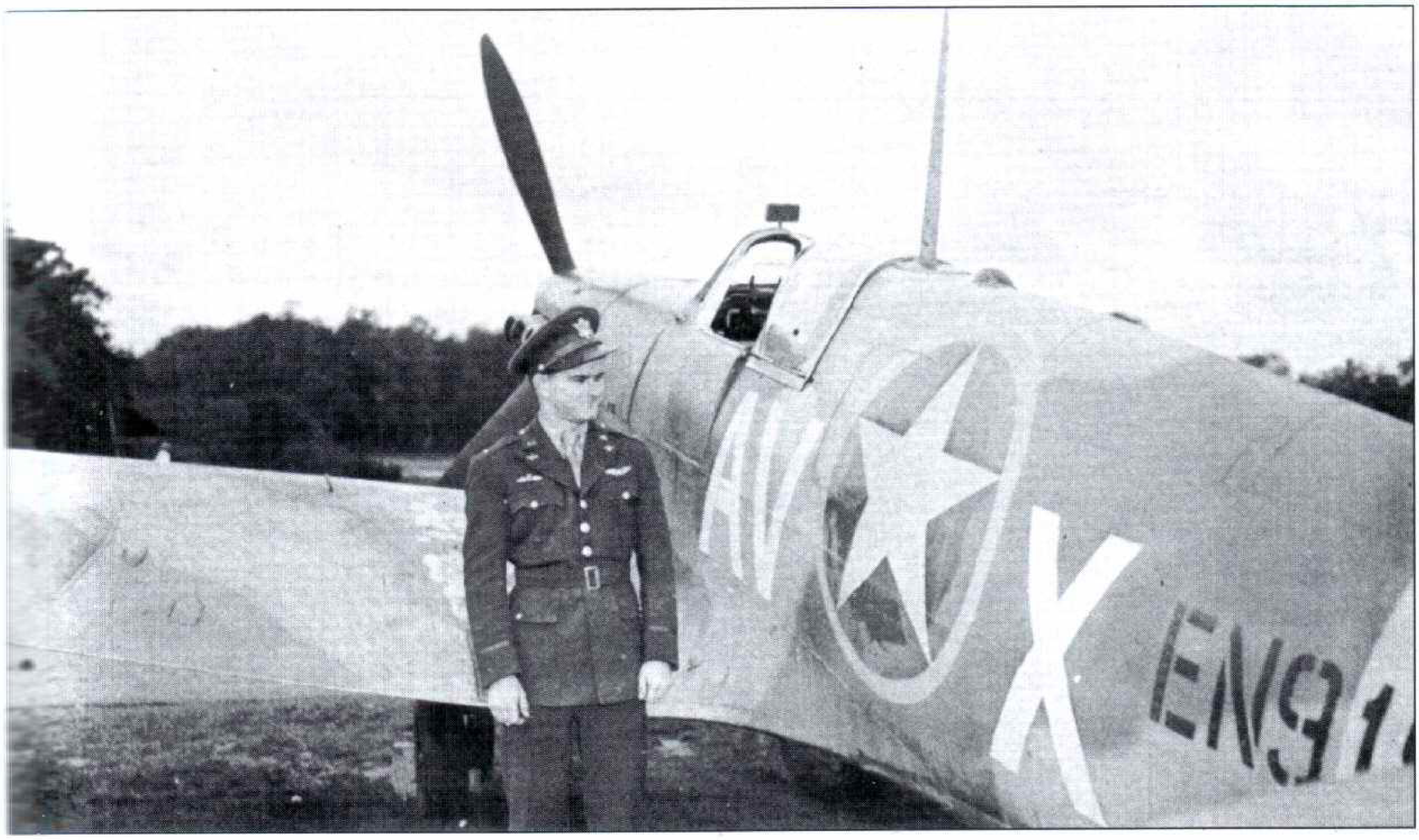


An example of an eagle symbol, on an American flown Hawker Hurricane. (IWM)

RAF Fighter Command European Theatre markings of *Sky* 18" rear fuselage band and spinner plus *Ident. Yellow* wing leading edge strips, were retained when the Eagle Squadrons transferred to the USAAF.

INTO ACTION AS THE 4TH FIGHTER GROUP

The Group's first C.O. was Colonel Edward W. Anderson and its Squadrons were commanded by Major Gus Daymond, Major W.J. Daley and Major McColpin. Daley had 2.5 victories in Spitfires and McColpin



A 335th FS Spitfire Mk VB, EN918, clearly showing the remains of an overpainted RAF roundel. The new USAAF cocarde is 30" nominal diameter with a 2" yellow ring resulting in an overall diameter of 34". The 'shadow' of the old RAF 36" yellow ring is visible outside the American marking. (USAAF)

3, plus 9 later victories in other types. Operational control was still in RAF hands and an RAF Wing Commander led 'the Debden Wing', as the Eagles were dubbed, on missions. On 22 November 1942, Major Blakeslee replaced Daley as C.O. of the 335th FS, with Blakeslee then beginning a steady rise to become one of the most respected combat leaders in American military aviation history.

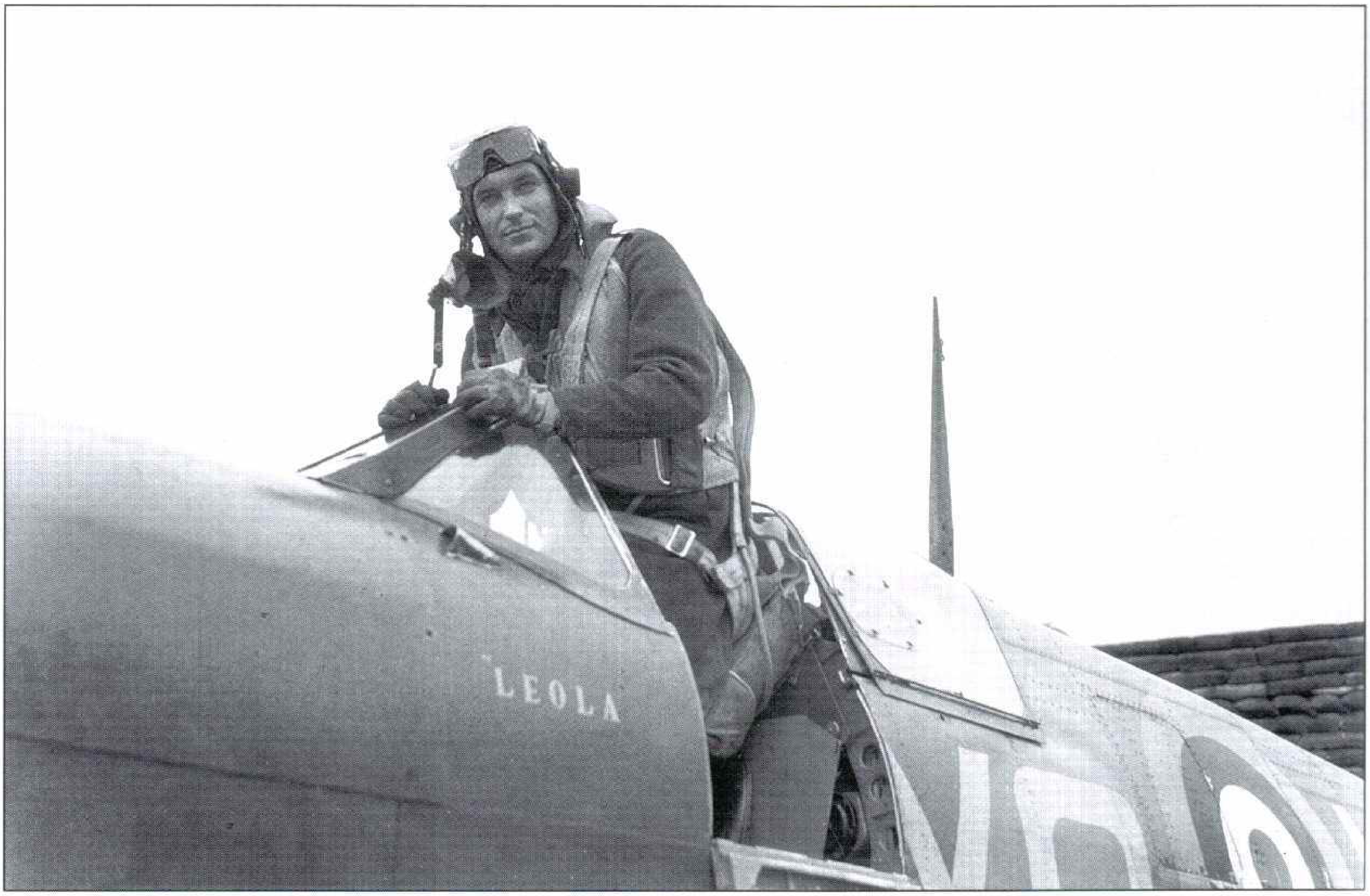
The 4th FG flew convoy patrols, fighter sweeps and coastline patrols with its short range Spitfires until March 1943. The 334th FS pilots checked out on P-47 Thunderbolts and acted as type conversion instructors for the rest of the Group. By late February 1943, the 334th was operational on Thunderbolts. The Squadron flew the P-47's *first ever* combat mission on 10 March, led by Lt. Colonel Peterson.

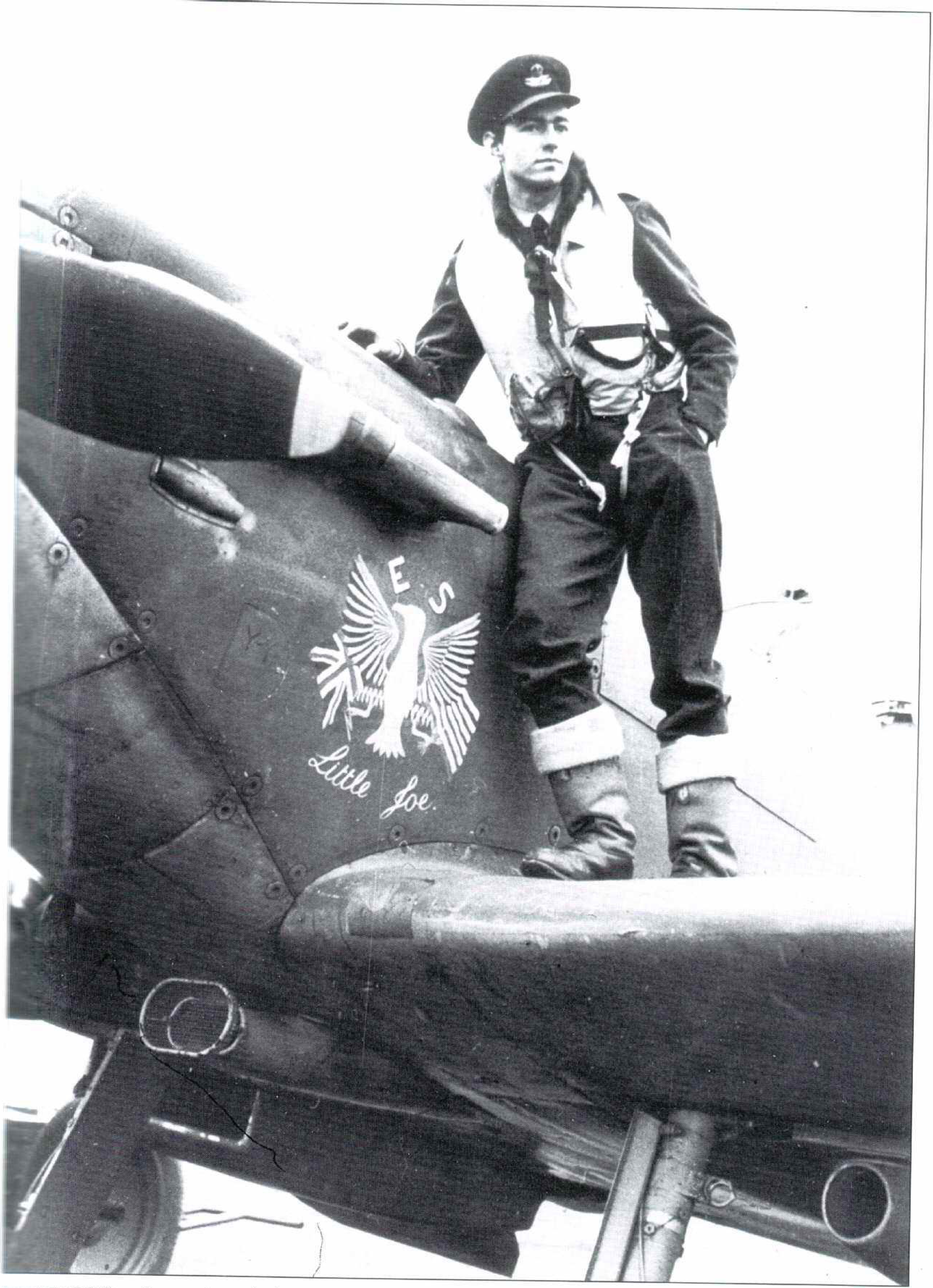
In early April, new squadron code letters were assigned to P-47s. These were 'QP' for 334, 'WD' for 335 and 'VF' for 336. These happened to be the same I.D. letters used by the 52nd FG in the Mediterranean. The 56th and 78th Fighter Groups had arrived in England between November 1942 and January 1943, also equipped with Thunderbolts. On 8 April, P-47s of all three groups participated in an uneventful Circus operation led by Lt. Colonel Peterson. Further P-47 missions were flown and on 15 April things heated up. Blakeslee shot down an Fw 190 and two other pilots registered victories. Engine failure forced Lt. Colonel Peterson to ditch in the English Channel that day, but fortunately he was rescued by an RAF Air-Sea-Rescue Supermarine Walrus amphibian. One month later Blakeslee was appointed Group Executive Officer and Operations Officer when Peterson was assigned to VIII FC staff.

The 4th FG exchanged their P-47s for P-51B Mustangs in early 1944 and by the end of the war their total air and ground victories numbered more than a thousand.

Flying Officer Carl H. Miley when he was with 71 Squadron RAF. (IWM)

Donald J. M. Blakeslee was in the RCAF before being transferred to 133 Squadron, later the 336th FS. In his long career in the USAAF, Blakeslee never allowed kill markings, nose art or personal insignia to be painted on his aircraft; even though he was a triple Ace and one of the leading fighter pilots of the war. This rare photo shows his wife's name on his Spitfire. (Canadian National Archives)





Another variation of an eagle symbol, on a 71 Squadron Spitfire named 'Little Joe'.
Pilot Officer Joseph Kelly stands on the wing. (Smithsonian Institution)

THE 52ND FIGHTER GROUP

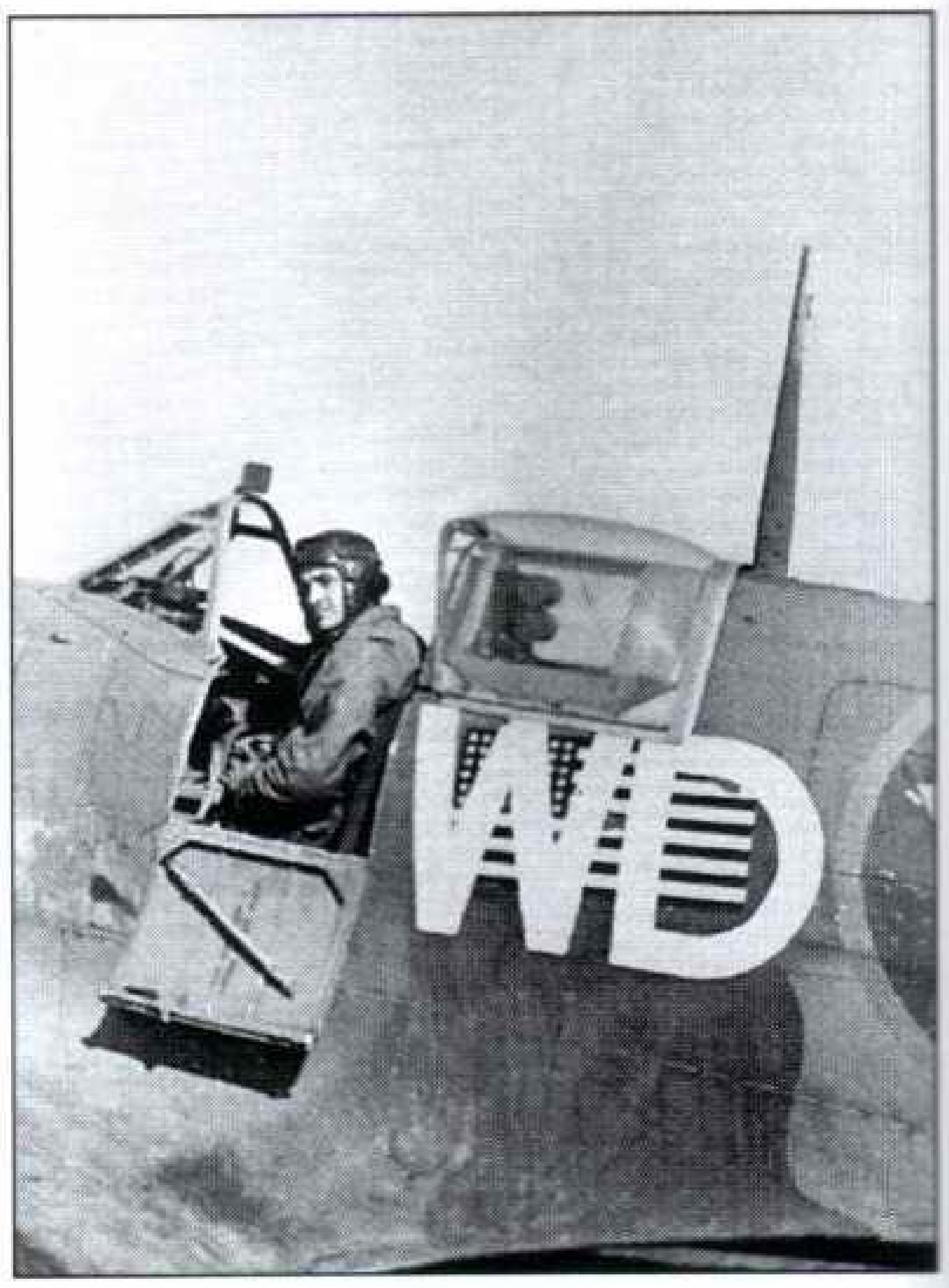
The 52nd PG (Pursuit Group), was activated on 15 January 1941, and received men from the 1st and 31st PGs at Selfridge Field, Michigan. Originally there were four squadrons assigned to the Group - the 2nd, 4th, 5th and a Headquarters Squadron (which was dropped in 1942). On 1 October 1941, some Regular Army men in the 52nd PG were transferred to units in California, delaying its posting overseas when war was declared. Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard Officers plus newly-inducted men were brought in to fill the ranks. Major Earl Barnes was the Group's first Commanding Officer, while 1st Lieutenants Don L. Wilhelm Jr., J. Francis Taylor Jr. and T. Alan Barnett commanded the 2nd, 4th, 5th FSs respectively.

Three months after creation, the Group joined the 31st PG at Camp Skeel in Michigan for training, which included shooting at radio-controlled model aircraft. The Group returned to Selfridge around 1 May and Major Robert L. Schoenlein replaced Barnes as Group C.O. Later at Grayling, Michigan, pilots worked with PT-17 trainers until receiving outdated Seversky P-35s, Curtiss P-36 Hawks and Republic P-43 Lancers. The Group was not up to Unit Strength when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, but it soon received P-39 Airacobras and began working up on them. On 1 January 1942, field manoeuvres took the 5th PS to New York, the 2nd PS to Norfolk, Virginia and the 4th PS to Langley Field in Virginia. All three squadrons returned to Selfridge Field on 12 January. On 18 February, the 2nd PS flew its Airacobras to Florence, South Carolina, while the 4th PS was split between Florence and Lanes, South Carolina and Wilmington, North Carolina. The 2nd PS moved temporarily to Wrightsville Beach, near Wilmington, North Carolina.

In May 1942, orders were given that the group was to be sent to England and on the 11th, the 52nd FG moved to the northeastern U.S. to prepare to fly its P-39s to England. During the month General Arnold changed the name Pursuit Group to Fighter Group and Pursuit Squadron to Fighter Squadron. Lt. Colonel Dixon M. Allison became Group C.O. and Lieutenant G.W. West, a man whom everybody soon liked, was named Executive Officer in June. As explained in 'American Spitfire Camouflage and Markings Part 1'; the high risk plan to fly the 31st and 52nd FGs P-39s to England was abandoned and on 1 July, the men of the 52nd FG sailed for England.

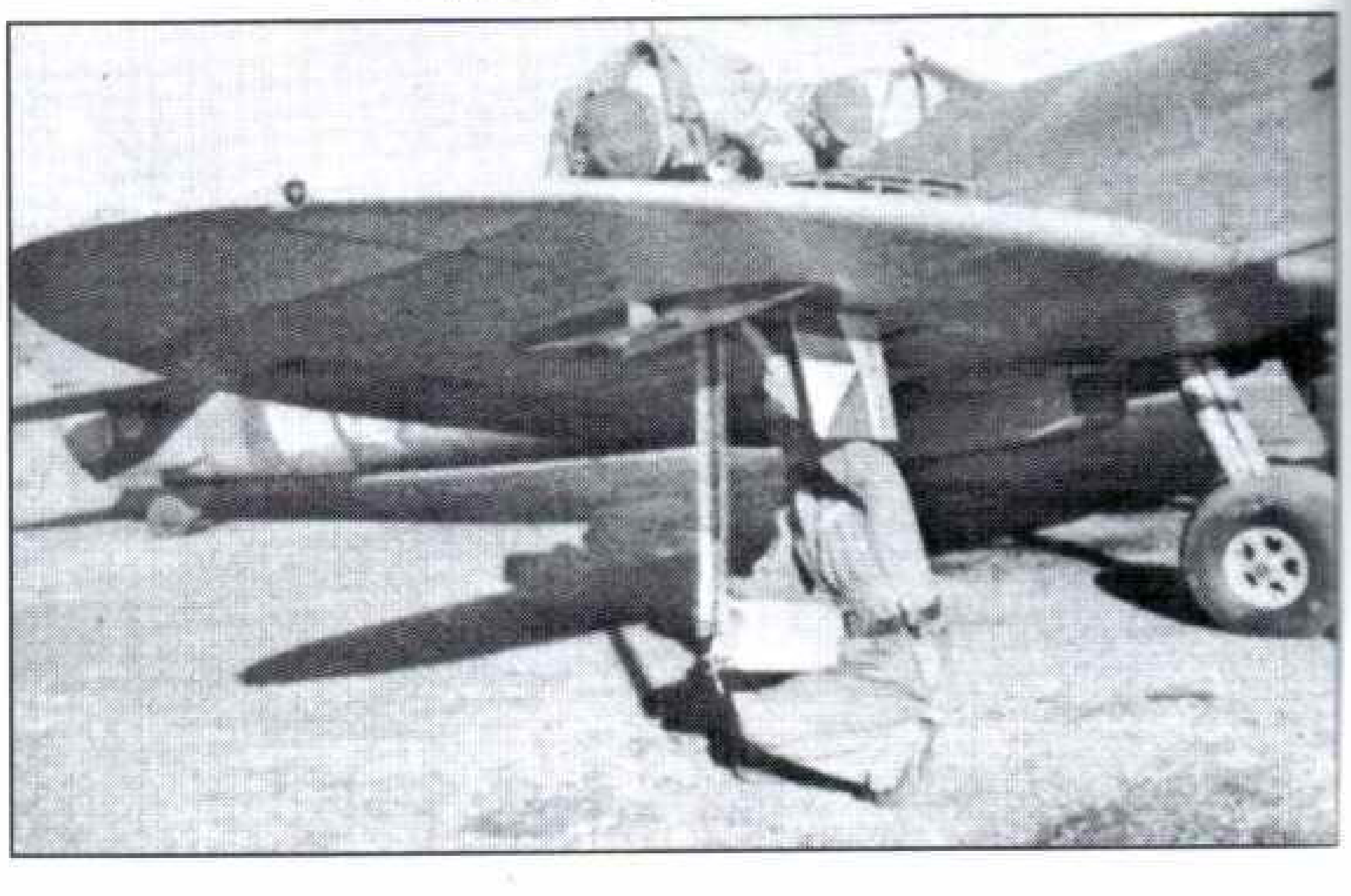
IRELAND AND ENGLAND

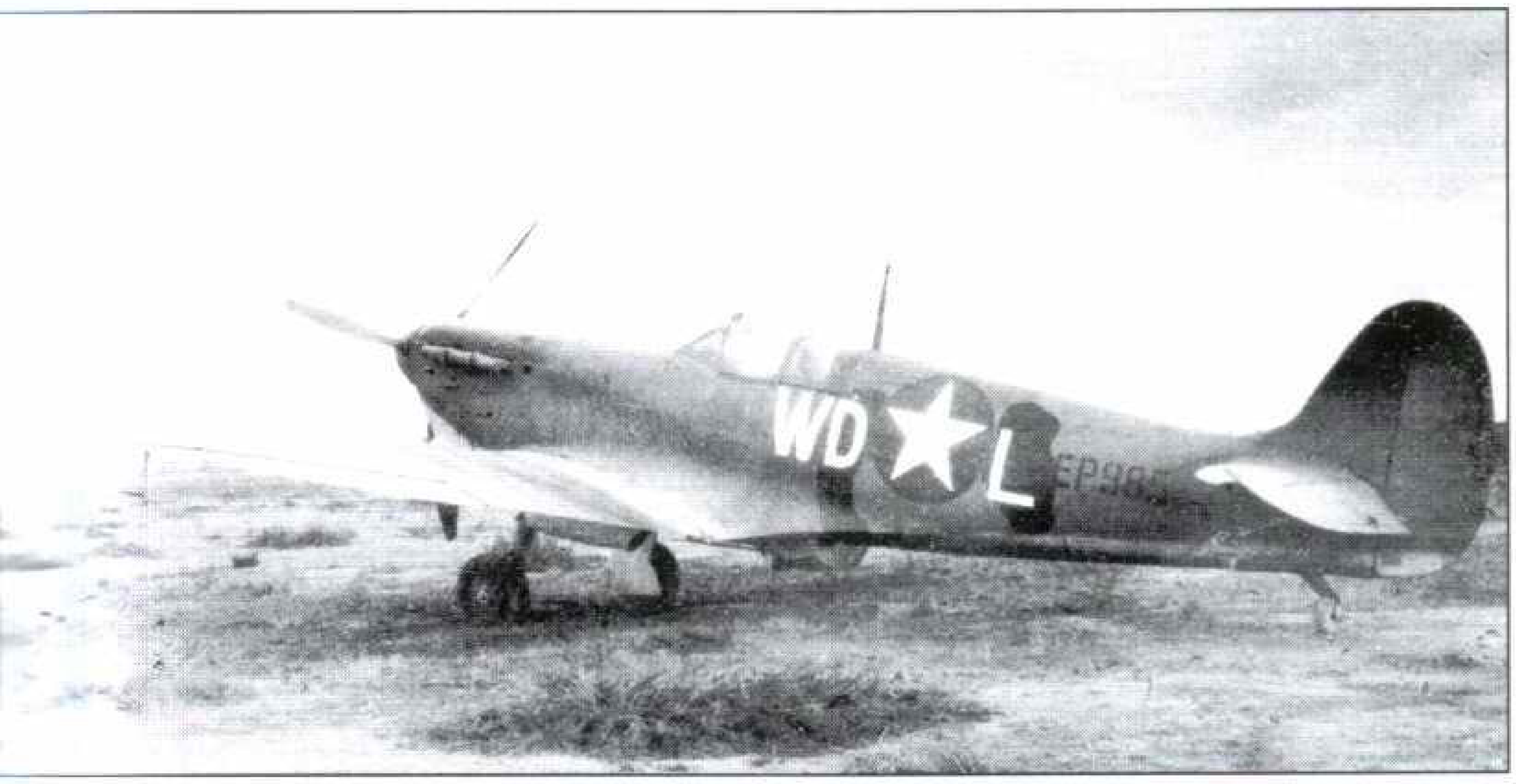
Most of the Group's personnel arrived in Liverpool, England and were sent by train to Eglinton, Northern Ireland to work-up on Spitfire Mk Vs. The squadrons remained there from 14 July to late August. The 2nd FS flew convoy patrols and reconnaissance missions starting on 5 August. The 4th FS made its first patrol on the 19th and the 5th FS flew its first on 7 August. Because the 5th FS was not combat-ready in time, it remained behind when the other two squadrons moved to England. The 2nd FS moved to RAF Maydown on 7 August and the 4th FS departed for RAF Kenley in Surrey on 7 September. Group HQ moved to Goxhill, Lincolnshire and remained there from 27 August to 29 October, 1942. The 52nd FG was not involved in covering the wasteful and bloody Dieppe 'raid', on 19 August, when many American fighter pilots first tasted combat over Europe.



A pilot, possibly Lieutenant Bease, sits in a 4th FS Spitfire. The Squadron 'WD' code letters have been painted over an American flag decal, as was the common practice, early 1943, in the North African campaign. (Cogal)

A Spitfire Mk VB recently repainted with USAAF cocardes. A 30" diameter underwing cocarde has been applied to this aircraft. The light coloured paint used to shade out the previous 32" RAF roundel is evident around the forward edge of the cocarde. (Via B Anderson)





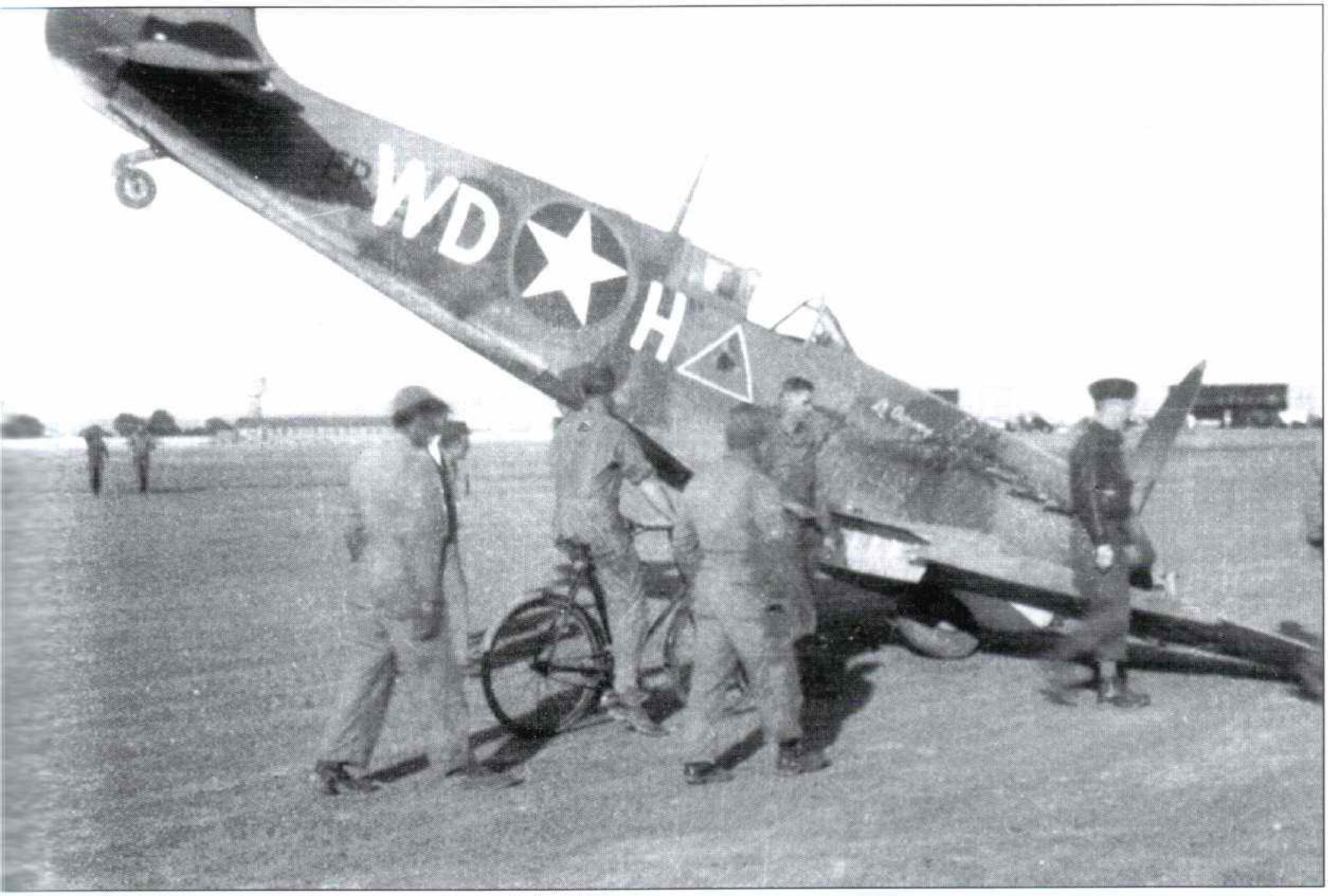
To quote the man who took this photograph, 'the aircraft were all camouflaged when they arrived. The only painting we did on them was to change the paint when we changed a wing. We painted out the British insignia on the tail and the call letters on the side. The colour was a tan colour blended with white to change the colour of the Spits.'

This photo, of EP985, a 4th FS Spitfire Mk VB, was taken at Calvi, Corsica, in 1944. (Toppen)

Planning for the Allied invasion of North Africa, set for November 1942, was already well advanced when the 2nd FS, under the command of Captain Keyes, moved to Biggin Hill and on 7 September it flew its first mission over France. According to Keyes twelve aircraft took off and didn't get lost'. All returned after seeing flak and watching a top-cover Canadian Spitfire squadron engage the Luftwaffe. Three more combat missions were flown between 7 and 13 September when the squadron joined the Group's Headquarters staff at Goxhill.

Both the 2nd and 4th squadrons were combat-ready by this time and the 4th FS, under Captain Robert Levine, moved to RAF Kenley and flew its first mission on 7 September. In mid-September, twenty- American pilots of the ex-RAF Eagle Squadrons transferred into the Group. Captain James Coward became C.O. of the 2nd FS. The FS finally joined the Group at Goxhill on 13 September but never actually flew missions from English bases. Its first combat missions were over North Africa.

This 4th FS Spitfire appears to have just nosed-over on landing at a North African airfield and drawn a crowd of curious squadron members. Although the triangular insignia has not been identified, the pilot's name on the cowling appears to be Lieutenant Amery. (Turk)



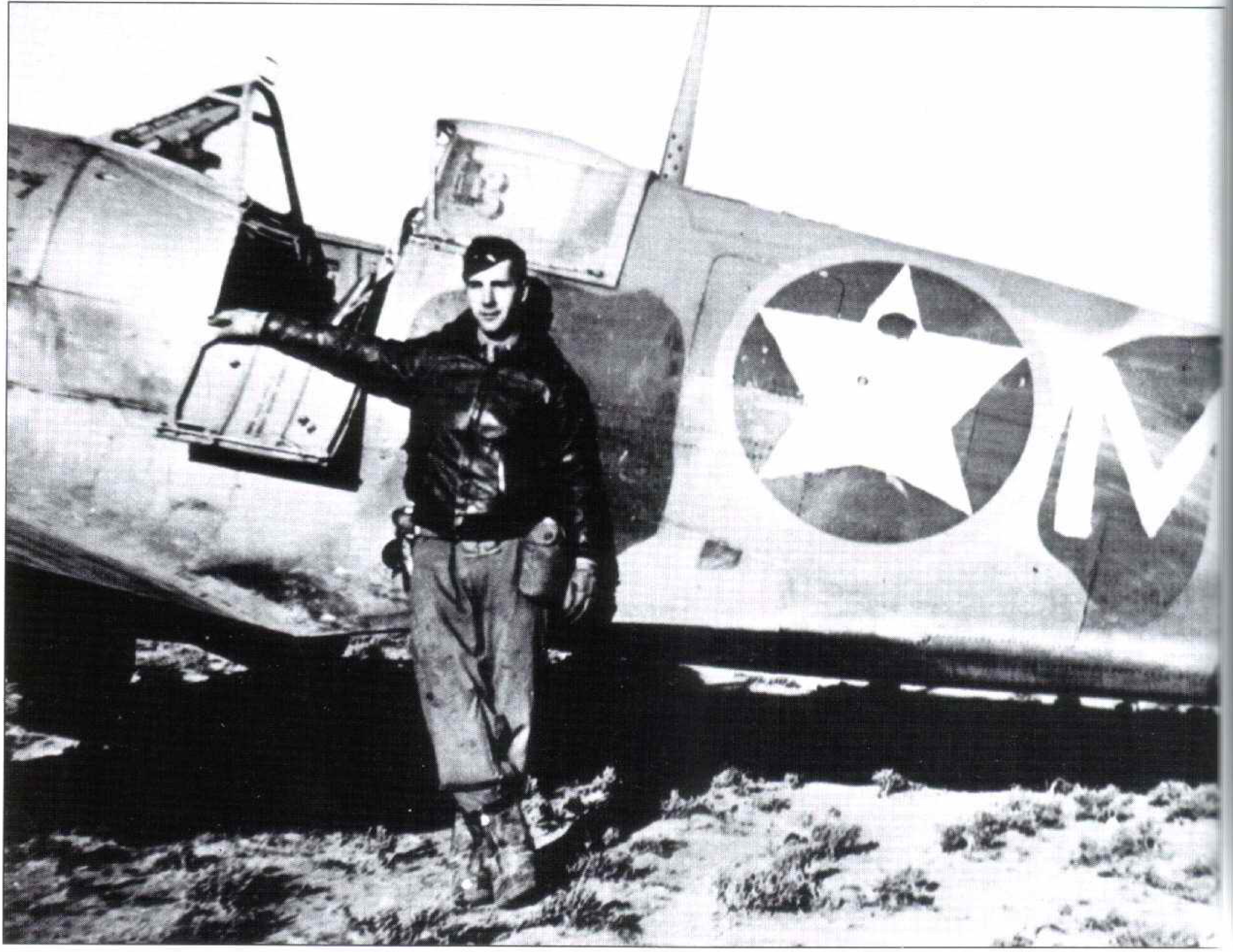
NORTH AFRICA

On 14 October 1942, several pilots selected from the 31st and 52nd FGs sailed to Gibraltar to test-fly the Spitfire Mk V (trop), fitted with bulky carburettor intake dust filters for tropical conditions, that both Groups were to receive. The British airbase squeezed onto Gibraltar was to be the jumping-off point for a mass flight of U.S. aircraft sent directly into combat in Algeria. Lt. General Eisenhower, Commanding General of Operation Torch, and his staff, were based in Gibraltar. The territory's airfield was so crowded that even a cemetery was used as an aircraft parking area!

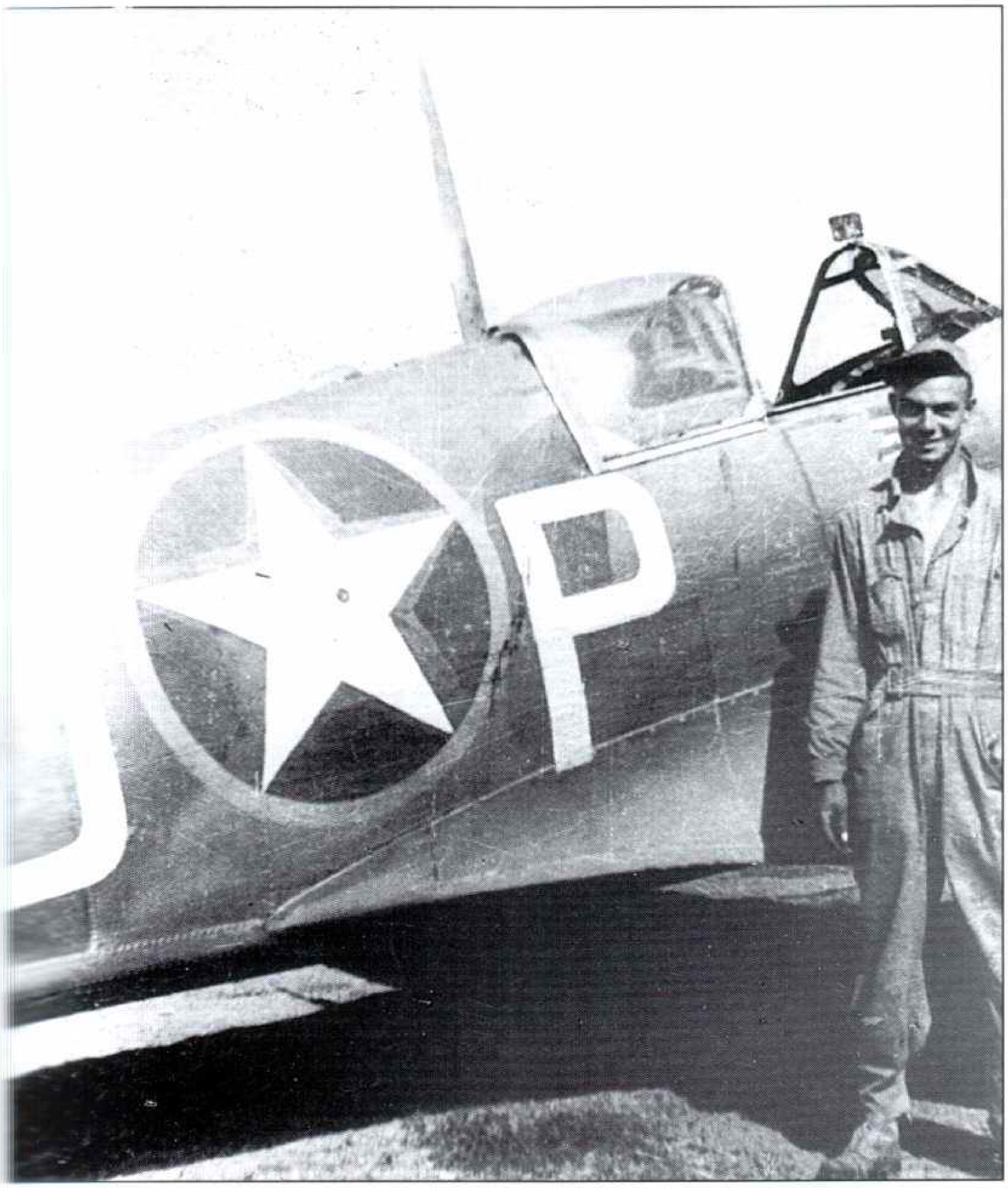
Seventy-five 52nd FG pilots departed from Glasgow, Scotland, on 1 November on *HMS Leinster*, and along with pilots of the 31st FG and RAF, arrived in Gibraltar on the 6th. The 52nd FG received Spitfire Mk V (trop) fighters and the men were briefed the next evening on their mission – providing cover for the invasion fleet off Oran, Algeria. When they had completed their missions, or were low on fuel, they were instructed to land at La Senia or Tafaraoui airfields south of Oran.

DESERT CAMOUFLAGE

The Operation Torch Spitfires received in Gibraltar were in British national markings and the RAF Desert Scheme camouflage of *Dark Earth* and *Mid-Stone* with *Azure Blue* undersurfaces. The Group's ground staff altered the RAF roundels to USAAF cocardes, applied individual aircraft code letters and painted over the RAF fin flashes. The 52nd FG Spitfires did not all receive Squadron code letters in time for the

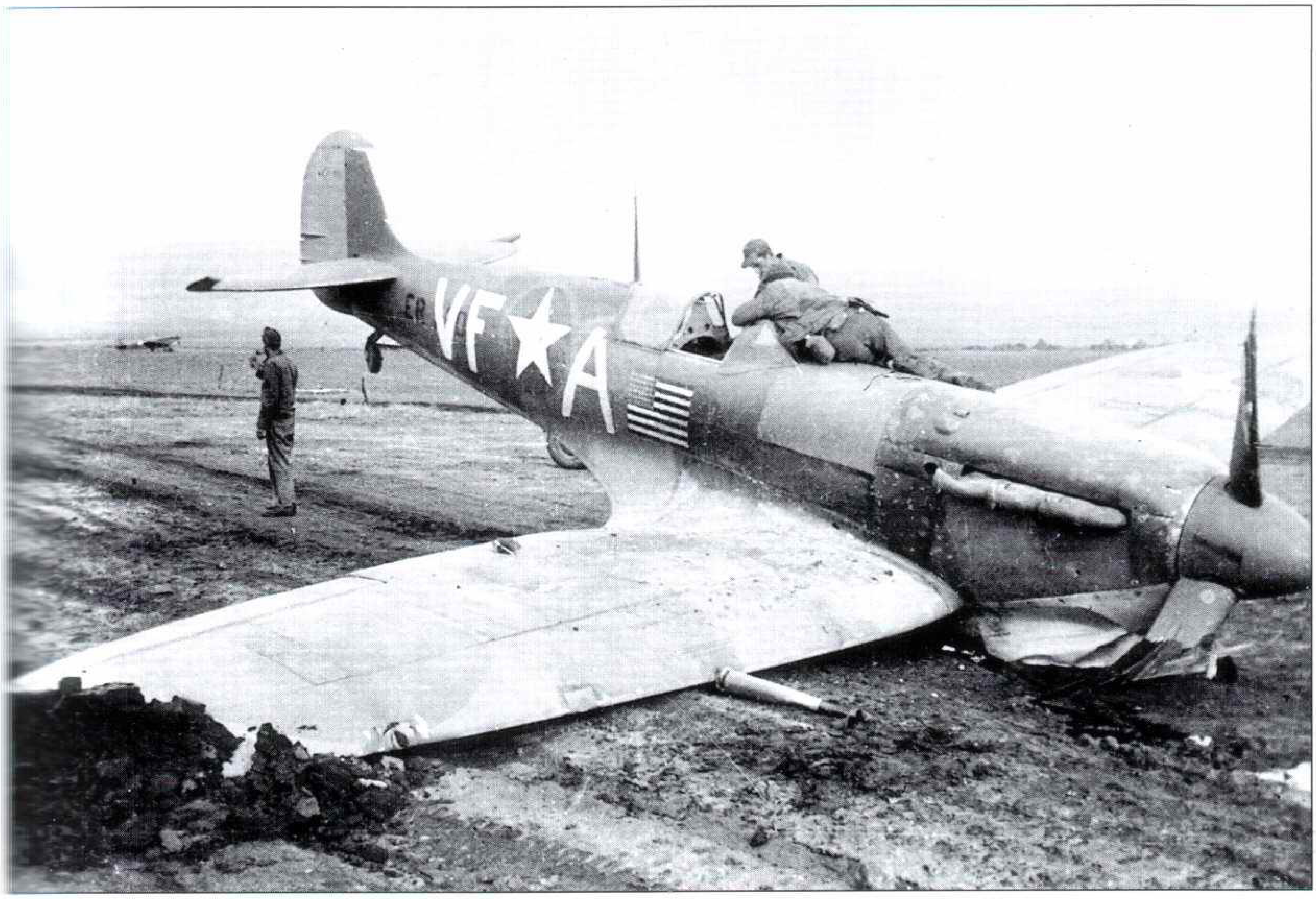


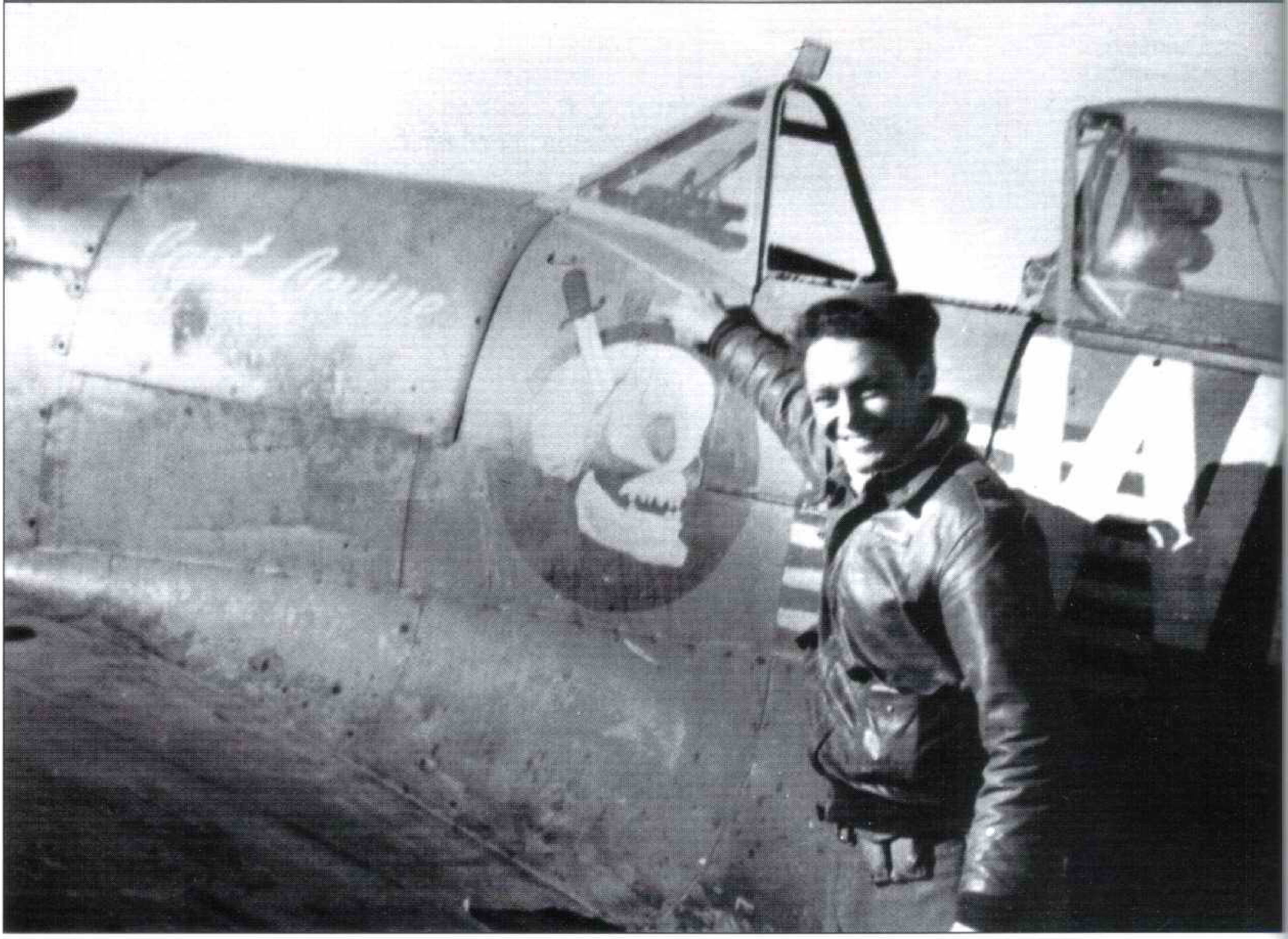
1st Lieutenant Wallace MacGregor o the 4th FS at Telergma, Algeria February 1943. Note the crudely hand-painted star hastily applied in Gibraltar His Spitfire carried only the individual letter 'M'. When the 52nd FG first arrived in North Africa they operated without their Squadron code letters o 'WD'. (R Klug)



Technical Sergeant Carl Borman of 'B' Flight was one of four Flight Chiefs with the 4th FS. He stands next to the Spitfire flown by 1st Lieutenant Frank B. Camp, early 1943, North Africa. A quick paint job at Tafaraoui or La Senia covered the RAF roundel which was later touched up, giving the stars neater lines. Note the remainder of a flag decal behind Borman's head. (C. Borman)

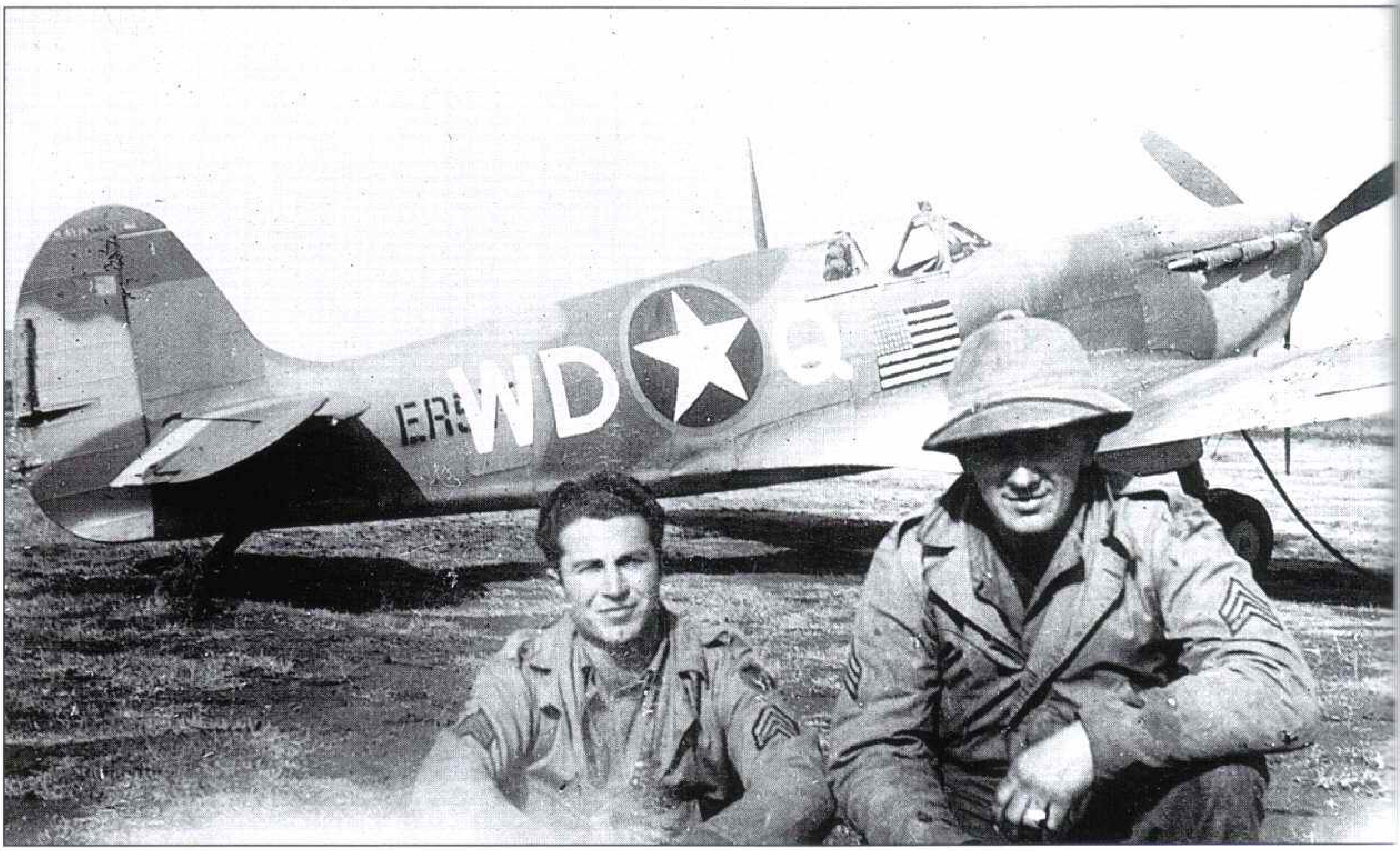
This 5th FS Spitfire Mk VB which crash-landed in Tunisia, crushing the tropical air filter, was repaired to fly again. Note the 40" cocarde on the port wing and the darker shade where an RAF roundel has been painted out on the starboard side. (Rivers)

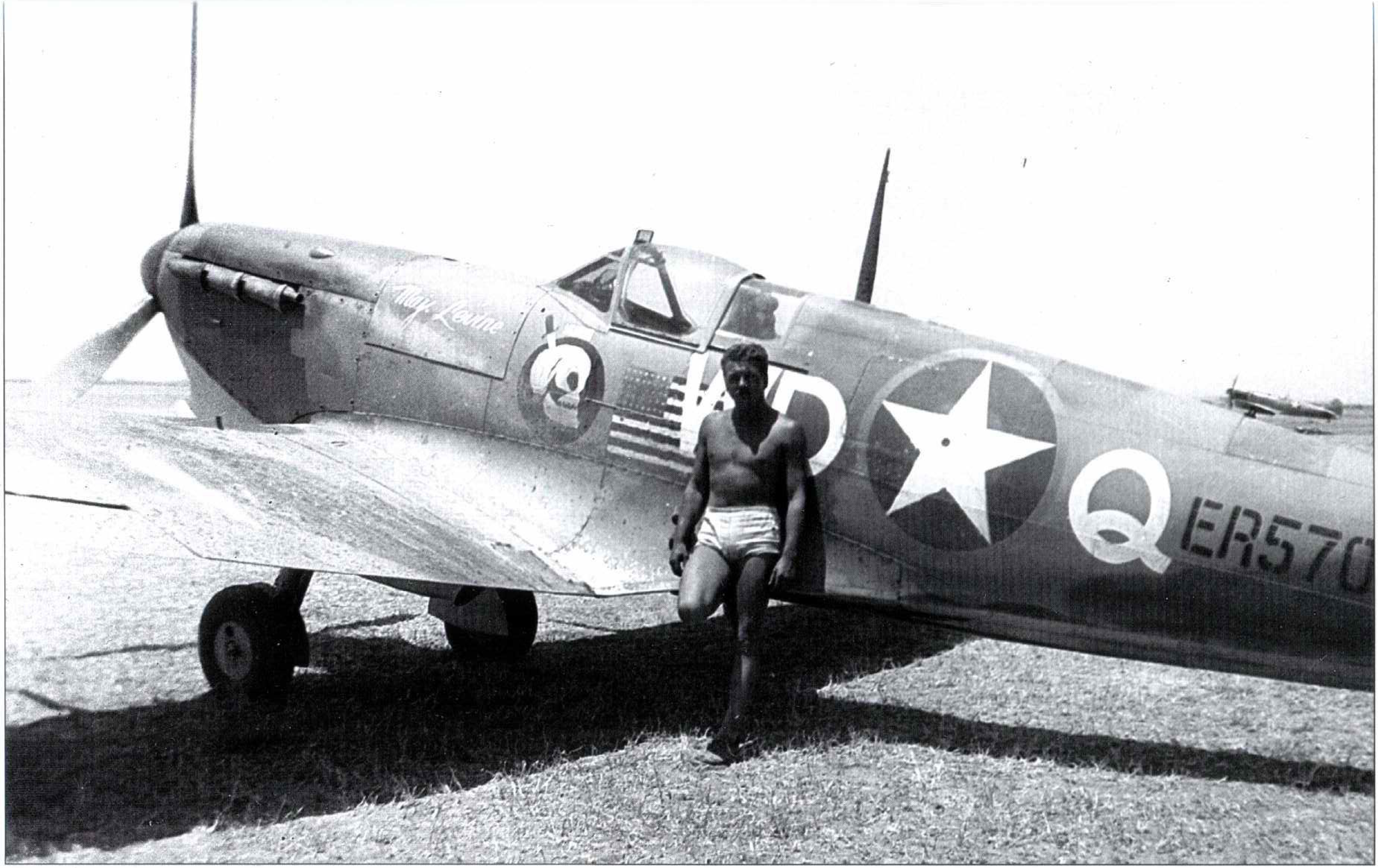




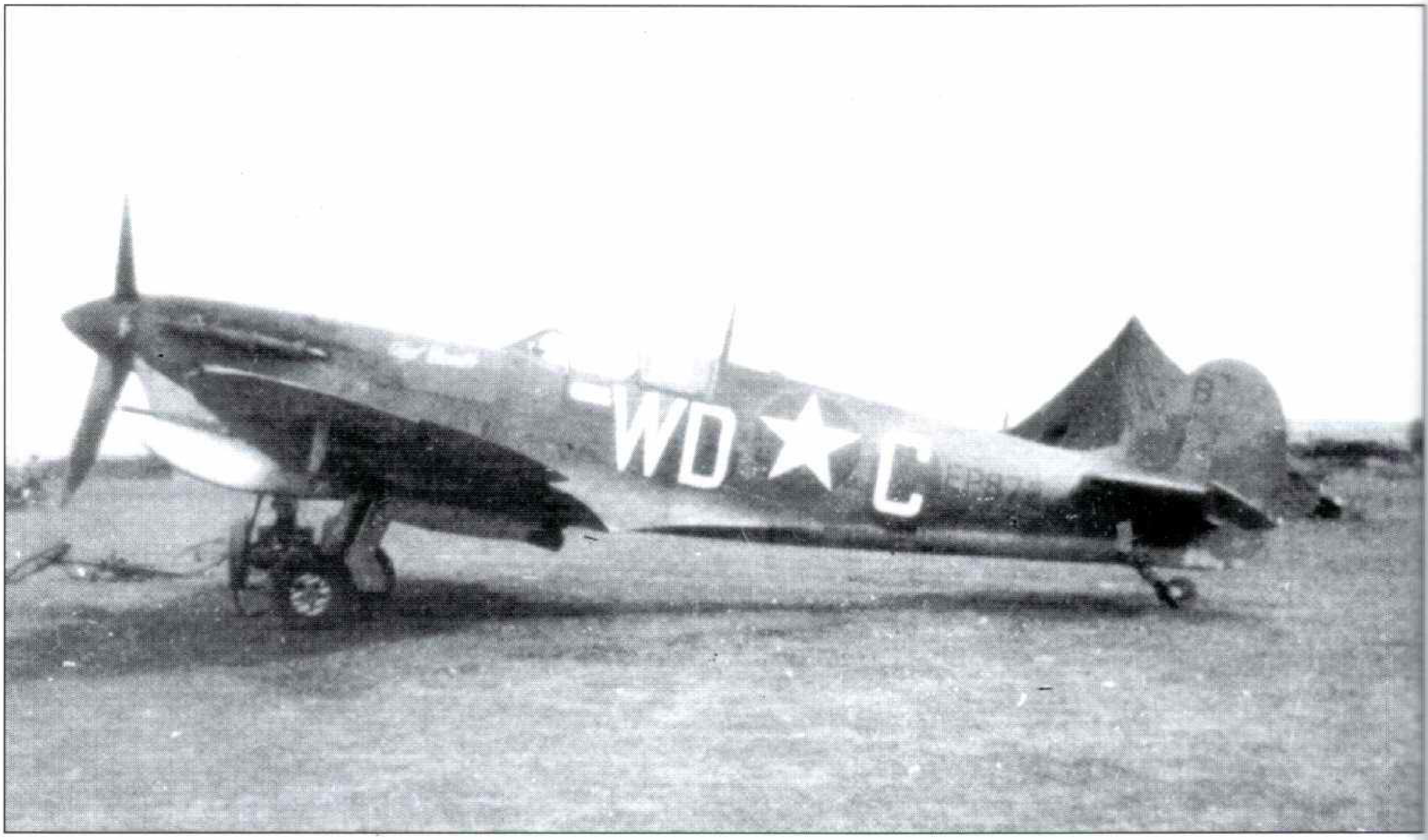
Captain Robert Levine of the 4th FS, proudly points at his first victory marking, December 1942, in North Africa. The squadron insignia and American flag decal are prominent. (R Levine)

Two unknown Sergeants in front of Major Levine's Spitfire VB of the 4th FS, about June 1943. Note the clear evidence of a painted out RAF fin flash. (Toppen)

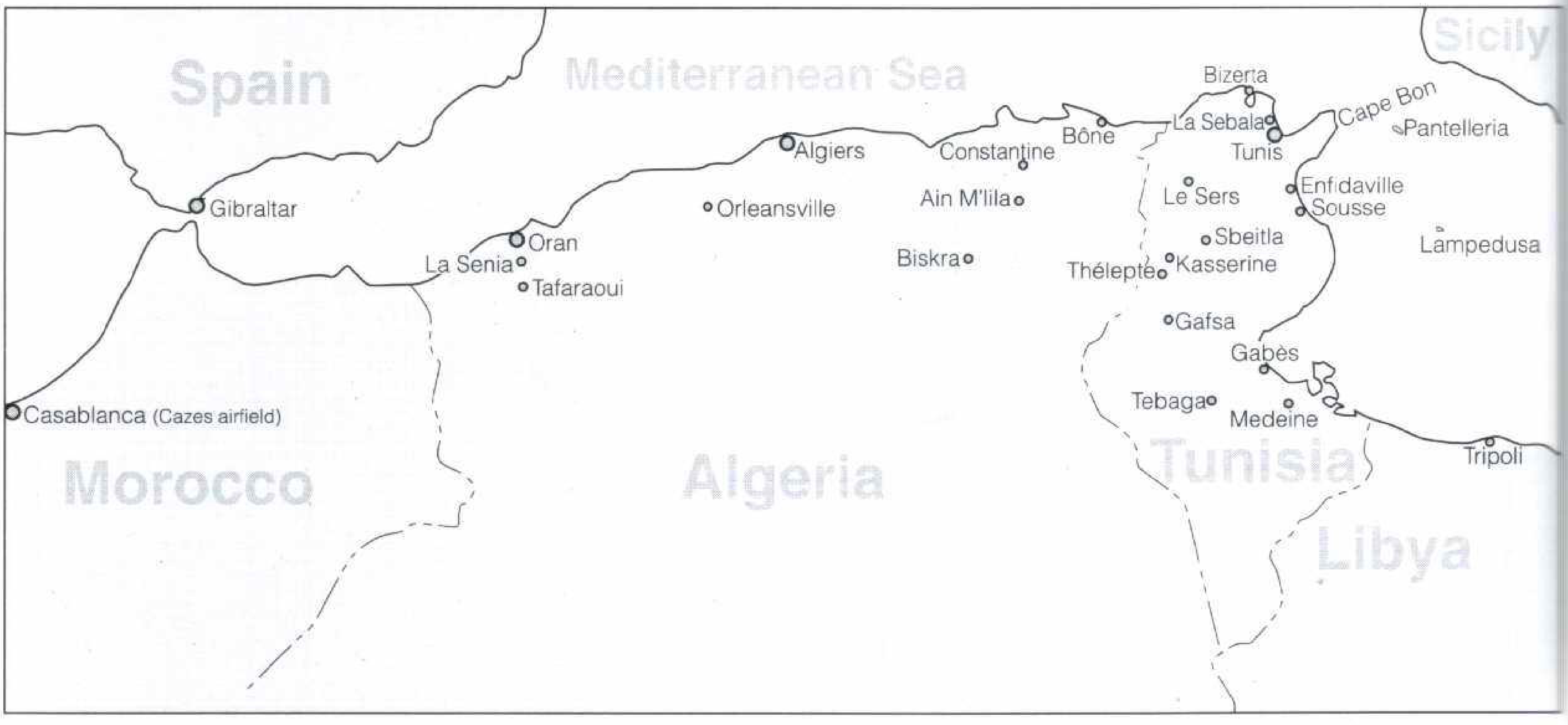


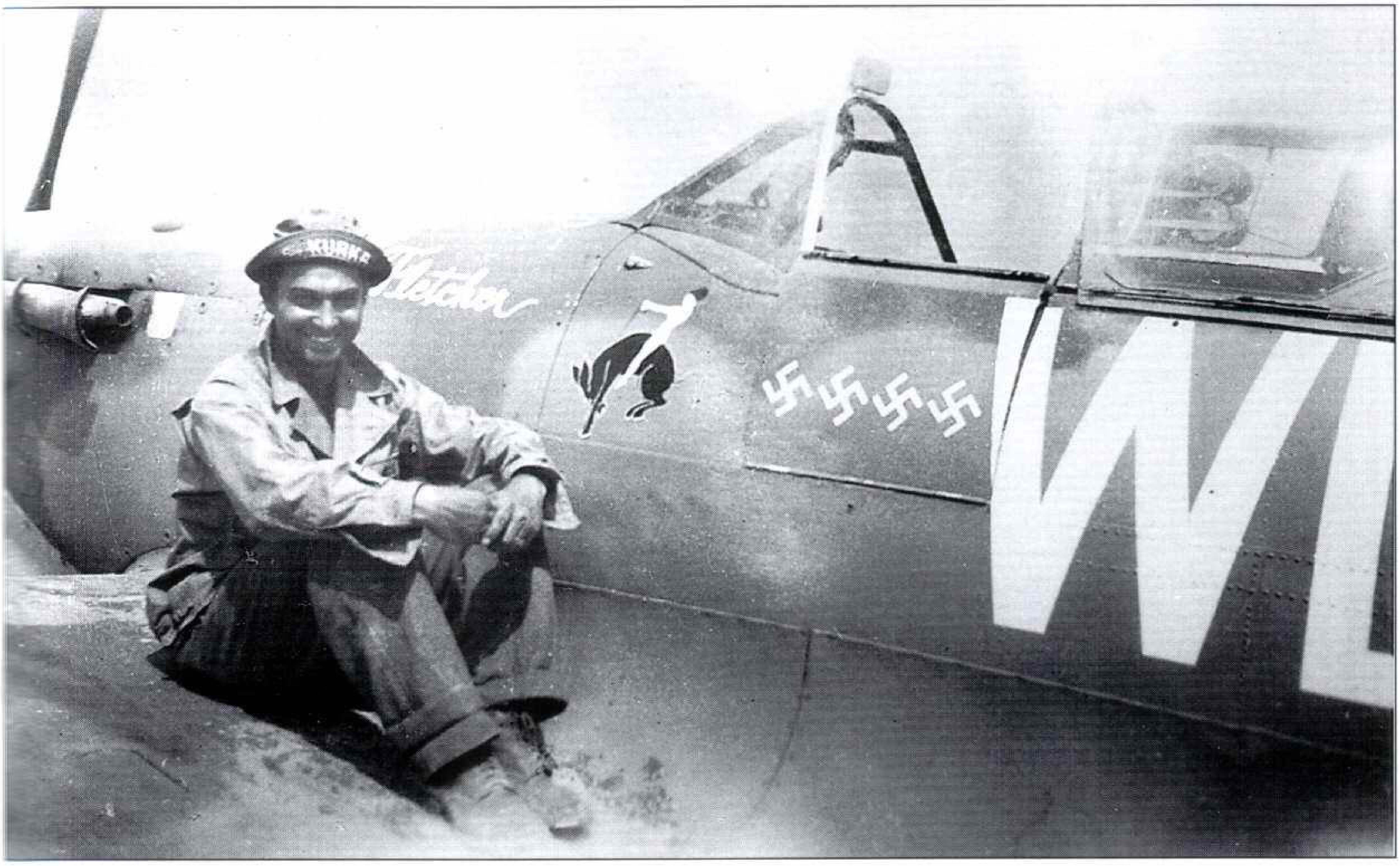


Rudy Buuck was a Ground Crewman with the 4th FS in June 1943, La Sebala, Tunisia, when he was photographed next to Major Levine's Spitfire Mk VB. At that stage, Levine had three victories painted above the squadron insignia. (R Klug)


Captain Robert Booth of the 4th FS flew this aircraft, serial EP872. Note the 8" high 'B' on the tail. A similar style 'K' appears on the tail of Spitfires destined for the Middle East on page 17 of 'American Spitfire – Camouflage and Markings – Part I'. (R Levine)

Torch landings; the 4th FS in particular operated for several months with just individual aircraft code letters. The 9th AF, which later operated in North Africa, painted RAF-style fin flashes on its American built aircraft types, but the new 12th AF, as a general rule, did not *. There are photos in this book which show 52nd FG Spitfires still with RAF fin flashes (ie. not painted out) and these were most likely machines transferred in from RAF squadrons. Upperwing roundels were replaced with cocardes, usually of 45" nominal diameter, plus an additional yellow ring. This yellow ring varied in width, with 2-3 inches being common. Fuselage cocardes were modified from the existing 36" RAF type 'C1' roundels and the underwing RAF type 'C' roundels were generally given a yellow ring and modified to cocardes. As an additional recognition marking for the benefit of the Moroccan and Algerian population, a


Spain
Mediterranean Sea
Sicily
Bizerta
La Sebala
Cape Bon
Pantelleria
Tunis
Bône
Constantine
Algiers
Gibraltar
Orleansville
Ain M'lila
Le Sers
Enfidaville
Sousse
Oran
La Senia
Tafaraoui
Biskra
Sbeitla
Théleptè
Kasserine
Lampedusa
Gafsa
Gabès
Casablanca (Cazes airfield)
Tebaga
Medeine
Tripoli
Morocco
Algeria
Tunisia
Libya
North Africa, showing towns and bases used by the 52nd FG.



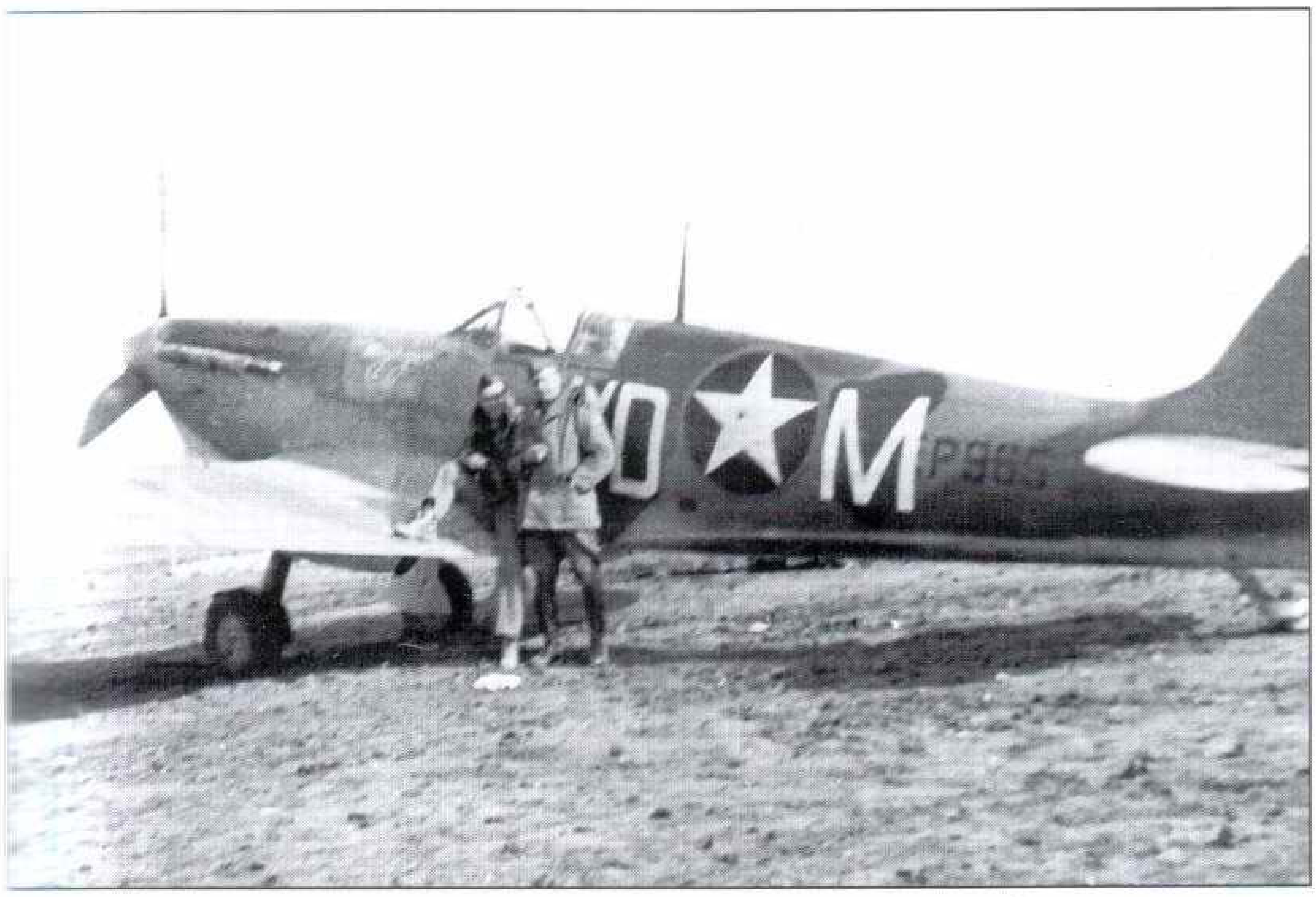
Captain Moss K. Fletcher's Crew Chief, Sergeant Kurka, sits on their Spitfire's wing. Fletcher, with the 4th FS had achieved his four victories in Spitfires when this photo was taken. See Appendix 2. (Kurka)

emporary American flag decal was applied to both sides of the fuselage round the cockpit area, the exact location varying. Spinners and code etters on 52nd FG aircraft in the MTO (Mediterranean Theatre of Operations) were specified as white at this time; but remember, these arkings were field-applied in a hurry and were frequently roughly painted.

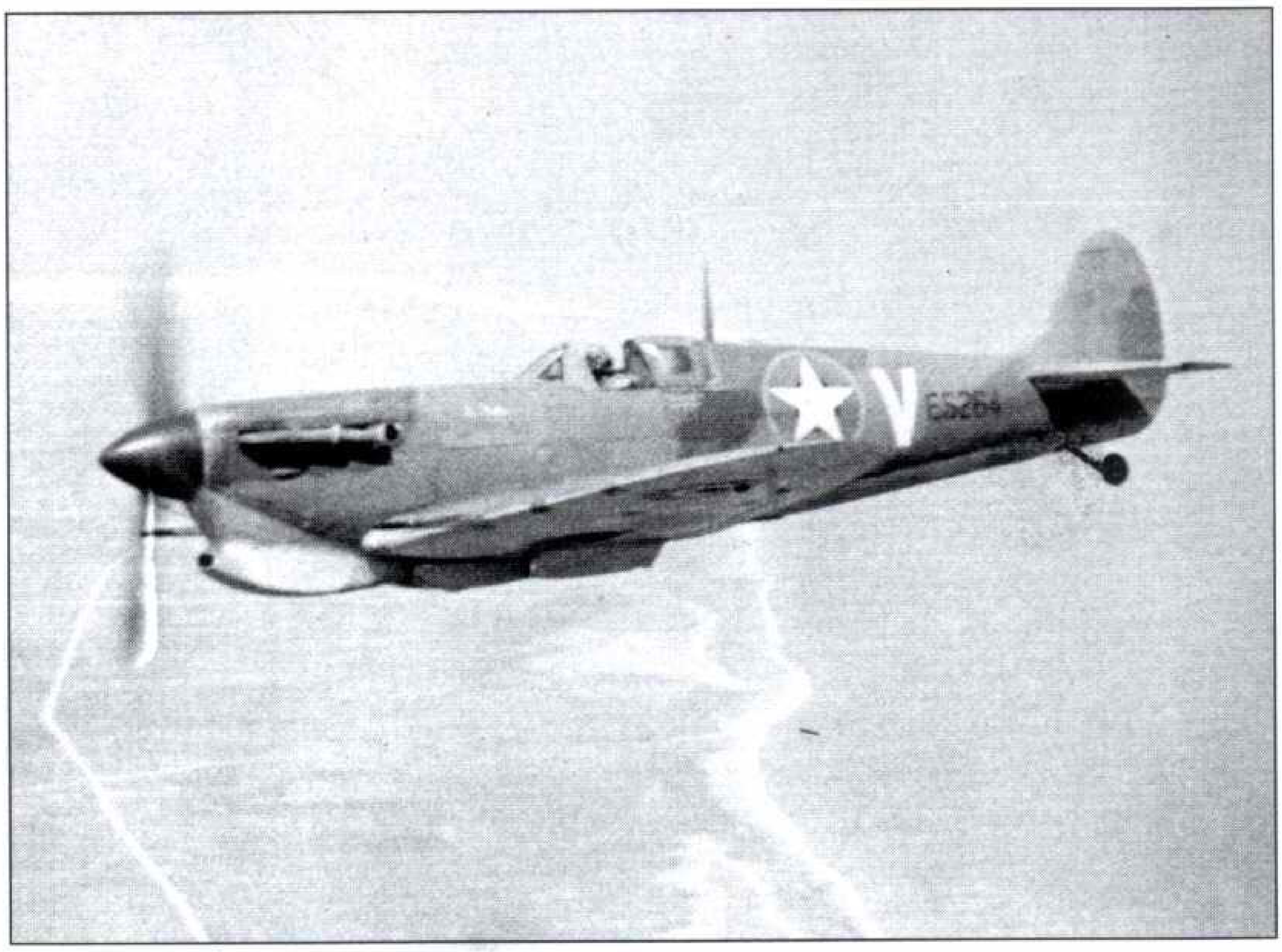
THE OPERATION TORCH LANDINGS

Weather on 8 November 1942 was atrocious and delayed the departure f the 52nd FG, which was forced to fly its Spitfires into Tafaraoui, ten iles south of La Senia, as enemy Vichy French forces still held the ore modern airfield at La Senia.

Twelve Spitfires of the 2nd FS, led by Lt. Colonel Graham 'Windy' West, escorted the B-17 carrying Maj. General James Doolittle, Commanding General of the newly-created 12th AF to Algeria. Doolittle's



Note the winter clothing of these men of the 4th FS photographed next to a Desert camouflaged Spitfire Mk VB (trop). The squadron codes, 'WD' would have been applied later than the individual aircraft letter 'M' and are quite different in style. (R Levine)



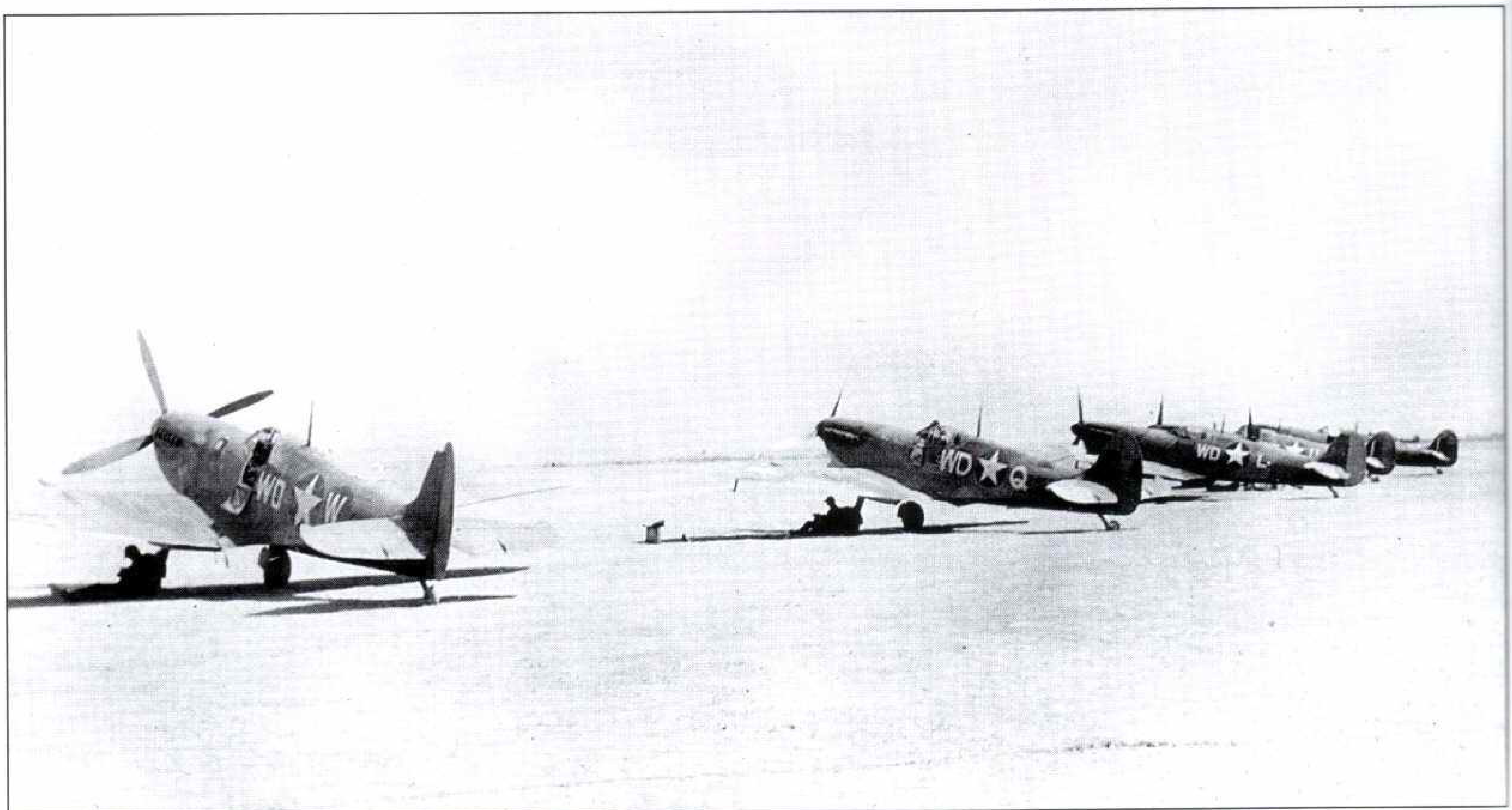
This photograph, taken in August 1943, proves that some 52nd FG Spitfires still had no squadron code letters at that time. Here, Captain Edwin Fuller, who served in both the 2nd and 5th FSs (four victories, one in Spitfires) was flying over Cape Bon, Tunisia, in 'V' ES264. Note the open canopy. (Hahn)

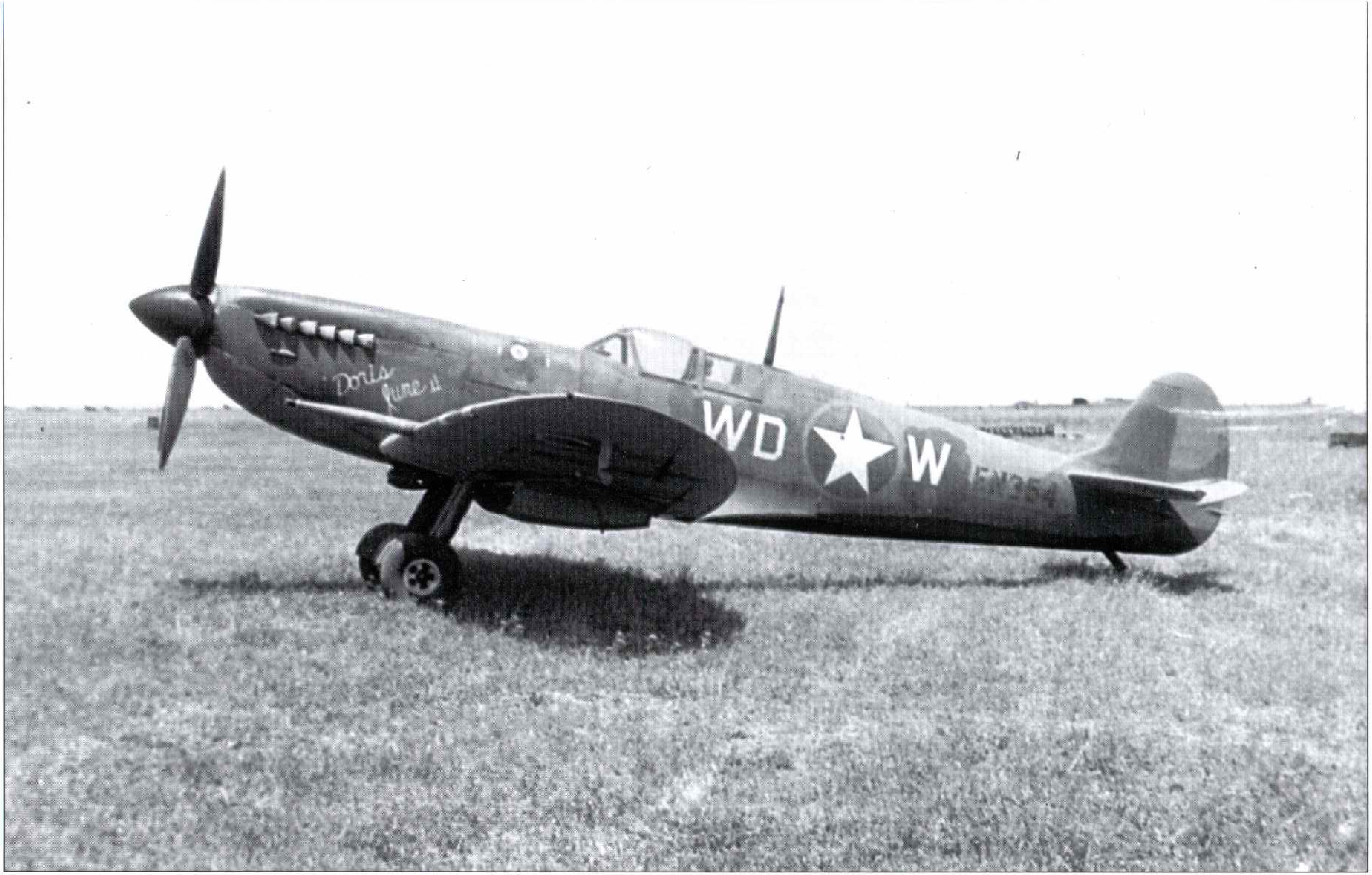
B-17 had taken off from Gibraltar before its escort and the Spitfires had trouble linking up with the B-17, as it flew in and out of cloud low over the Mediterranean. The cloudy weather caused navigation problems and, when several pilots became lost and low on fuel, they landed in outlying areas. Fortunately none were killed.

The British Eighth Army had gained a great victory at El Alamein in late October and Tobruk also fell to the British on 13 November.

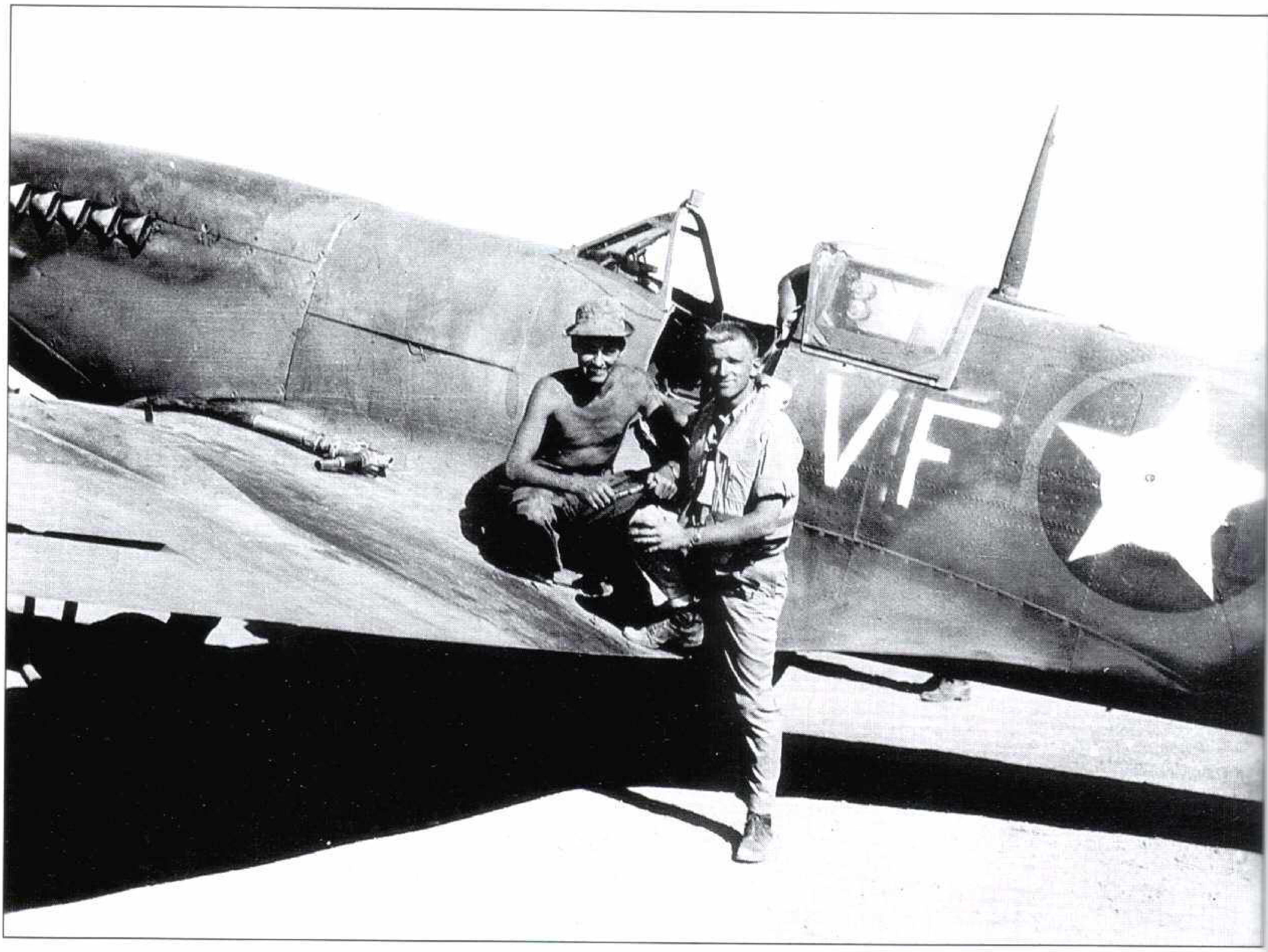
Vichy French forces, loyal to the Fascist cause, controlled ports and airfields and made the landings costly for the Americans. Proposed landing areas included Morocco on the Atlantic coast of Africa, and in Algeria facing the Mediterranean. The three port cities in North Africa to be taken by force or negotiation with the Vichy French were: Casablanca, Oran and Algiers. The 52nd FG was tasked with covering the landing at Oran, where approximately 50,000 Vichy French troops awaited the Allied army. The Luftwaffe and the Italian Air Force were generally

Spitfires of the 4th FS on alert, with ground crew under the wings avoiding the sun. Shown is a mix of Mk Vs and Mk IXs, some with RAF fin flashes on their tails. (Via P Ludwig)





'Doris June II' EN354 in June 1943, at La Sebala, Tunisia. This Spitfire Mk IX, flown by 1st Lieutenant Leonard V. Helton of the 4th FS, was a Mk V rebuilt to Mk IX standard. The desert camouflaged aircraft shows clear evidence of its previous larger code letters. (R Klug)



Captain Everett K. Jenkins with Sergeant Richard C. Brown in June 1943, at La Sebala. A hasty paint job has only partly disguised the roundel of this desert camouflaged ex-RAF Spitfire Mk IXc.

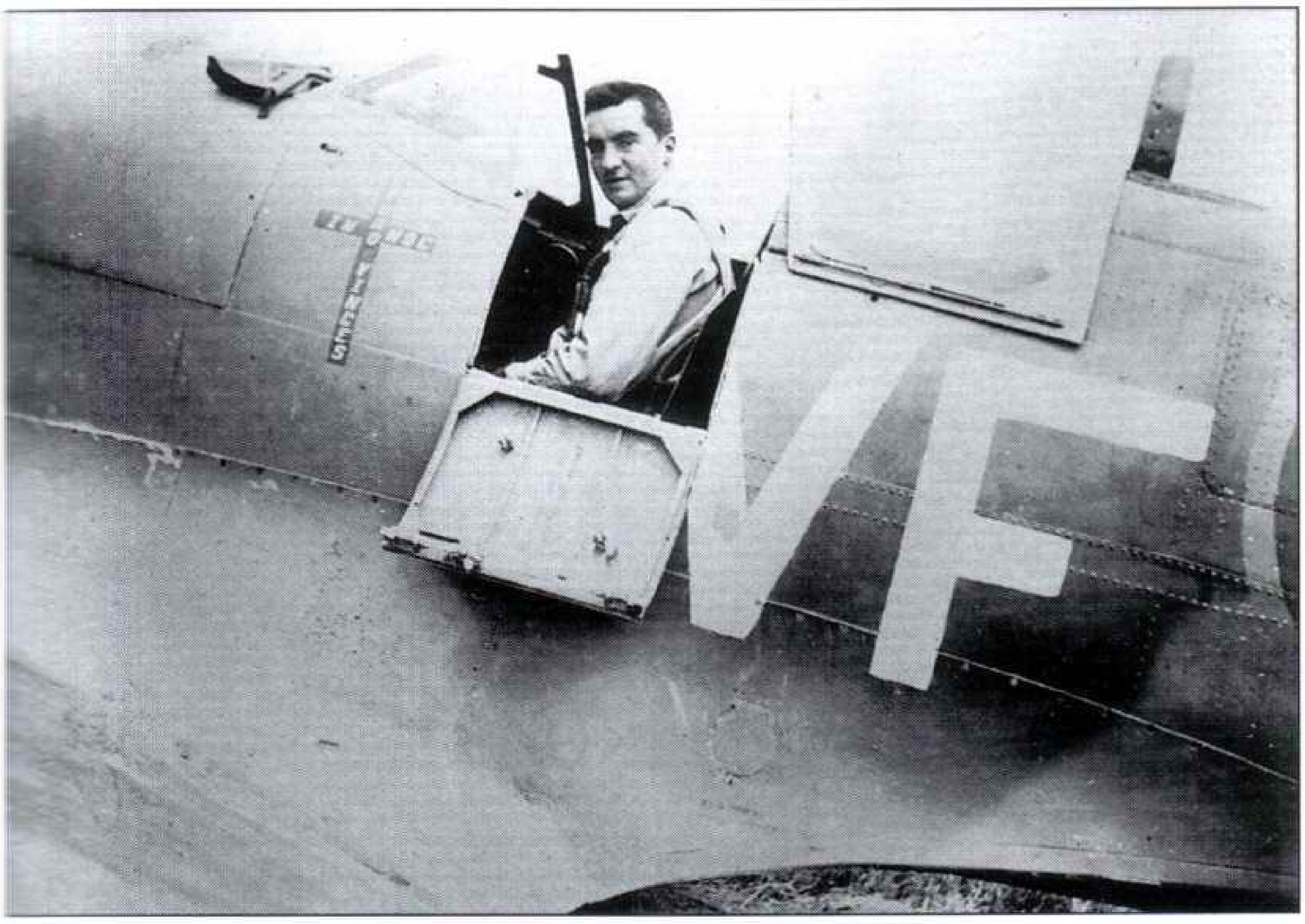
Note the casual placement of the fuel hose on the wing. (Jenkins)

well to the east of the Torch landings, or based in Italy, Sardinia and Sicily. The rainy season had begun and most airfields in North Africa became muddy, nearly useless for continuous operations by the Allies.

The 2nd FS and 4th FS flew into an unknown military situation in the Oran area on 8 November, and ground crews were not immediately available to service their aircraft. Men of the ground echelon had sailed on the *Empress of Canada* on 8 November, from Greenock, Scotland and arrived at Meirs el Kebir on 11 November. Some were transported on the *HMS Donnator Castle* and arrived off Oran on 11 November, to make their way on foot, inland to Tafaraoui. The 5th FS, under the command of Captain George C. Deaton, arrived on the U.S. troop ship *Brazil* at Oran on 12 November.

The 2nd FS was to be the most active squadron in the Group. It met Vichy French resistance for four days around Tafaraoui, with pilots having to refuel their own aircraft by hand, using five-gallon cans of petrol scavenged from French supplies. The number of serviceable aircraft steadily eroded until the ground crews arrived. The 52nd FG squadrons were finally based together at La Senia from 17 November.

Because of its later training and arrival in Algeria, the 5th FS was not sent into combat immediately, while the 2nd FS was given an early assignment. It's air echelon flew to a muddy airfield at Algiers on 25 November 1942 and on the 27th flew further east to Bône, just west of Tunisia, and near the big Luftwaffe bases in Sicily. The 2nd FS assisted 322 Wing, RAF, in making Luftwaffe air supply into, and evacuation from, Cape Bon an expensive matter. The 4th FS and 5th FS left La Senia on 2 January 1943, for Orleansville, Algeria.



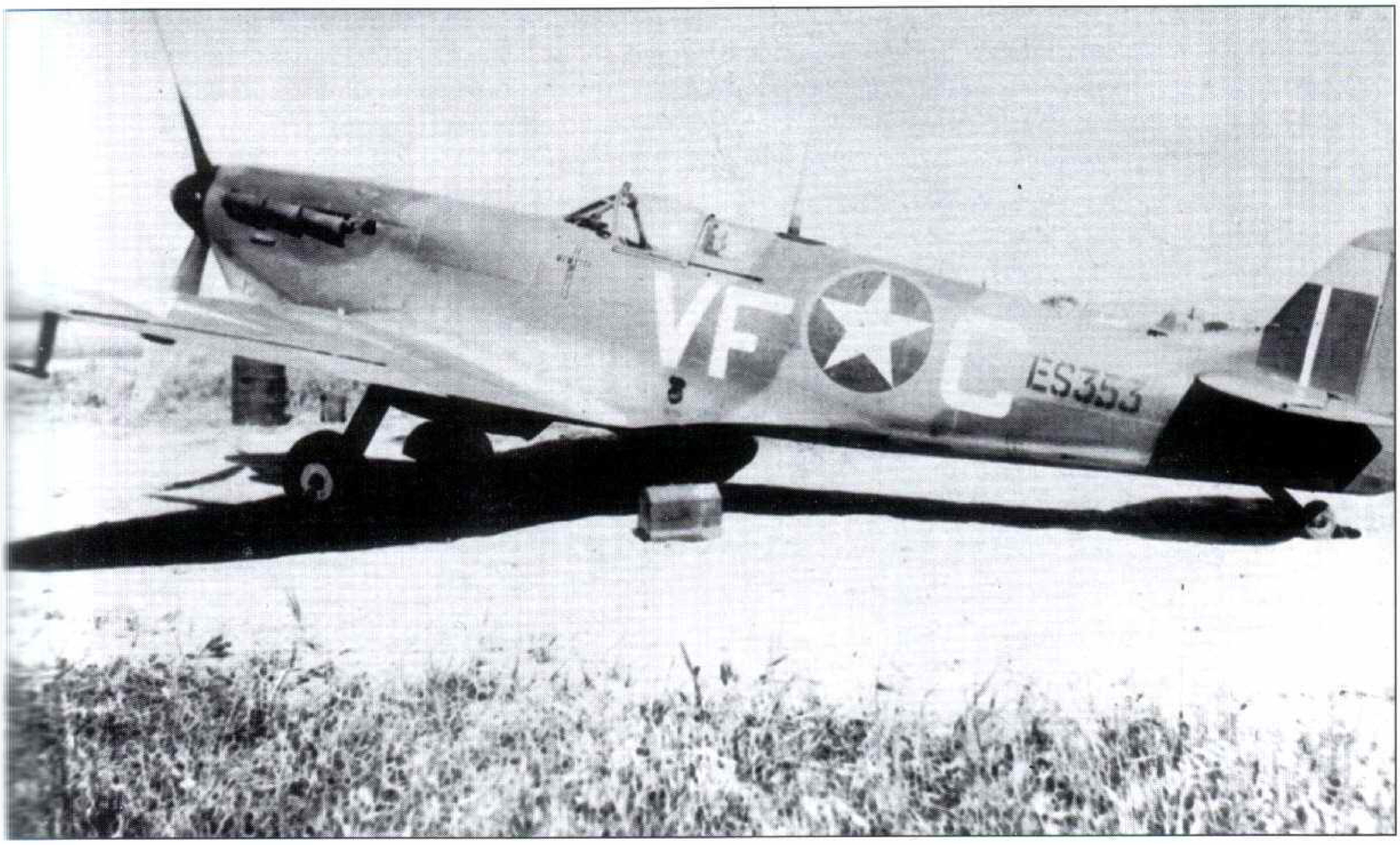
Captain Jerome S. McCabe of the 5th FS adorned his Spitfire with the Cross of Christ and the words in Latin, 'Win in this sign. 'VF-C', ES353, was a desert camouflaged Spitfire Mk Vc. Note the elongated upper stroke to the 'F' (Hahn)

After the 2nd FS had been in combat for a short time it moved to Biskra, Algeria and part of the 4th FS operated from Bône, to supplement the 2nd FS. As the 2nd FS had entered combat so early in the Campaign and performed well, Generals Arnold and Doolittle honoured the Squadron by visiting their base.

COMBAT SUCCESS

On 30 November, Major Coward of the 2nd FS was credited with the Group's first aerial victory. Lieutenant Harold R. Warren Jr., downed a Bf 109G on the same day while flying over Tebourba, Tunisia. On 2 December, Captain Arnold E. Vinson of the 2nd FS - soon to be an Ace - shot down two Fw 190s and shared a third with an RAF pilot over Bône. Other 2nd FS pilots scored and the total for the first week of December was 6 destroyed, 2 probables and 6 damaged. One pilot was shot down and killed and one was MIA (missing in action). Lieutenant

A port side view of Captain McCabe's Spitfire 'VF-C'. (Hahn)

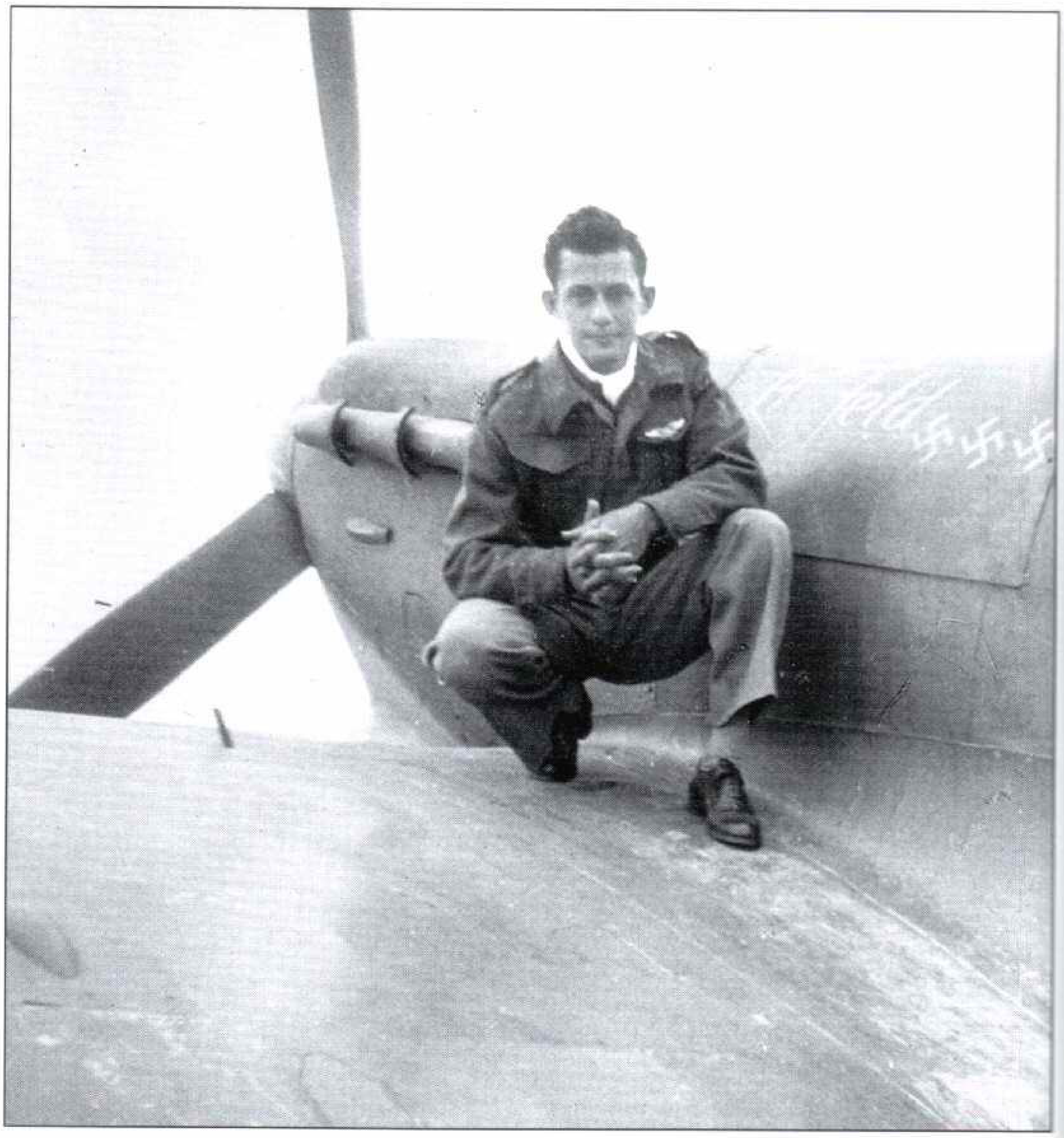


Luis T. Zendegui claimed an Italian Macchi C.202 on Christmas Day.

Lieutenant Sylvan Feld of the 4th FS, the man who became the highest-scoring American Spitfire Ace, achieved his first victory on 4 January 1943, when he shot down a Bf 109. He served in the 52nd FG for a lengthy period before transferring to the 410th FS, 373rd FG, for a second combat tour in Europe, on 9 September 1943. Feld never achieved another aerial victory and, while flying a P-47D, he was shot down and captured on 13 August 1944. He was the unlucky victim of a U.S. bombing raid to Germany on 20 August when an exploding bomb wounded him. He died the following day. Feld, from Woodhaven, New York, won the Silver Star, DFC and 25 Air Medals. Of WWII USAAF Aces, 'Sid' Feld is among the least remembered, but flew his Spitfire with devastating results.

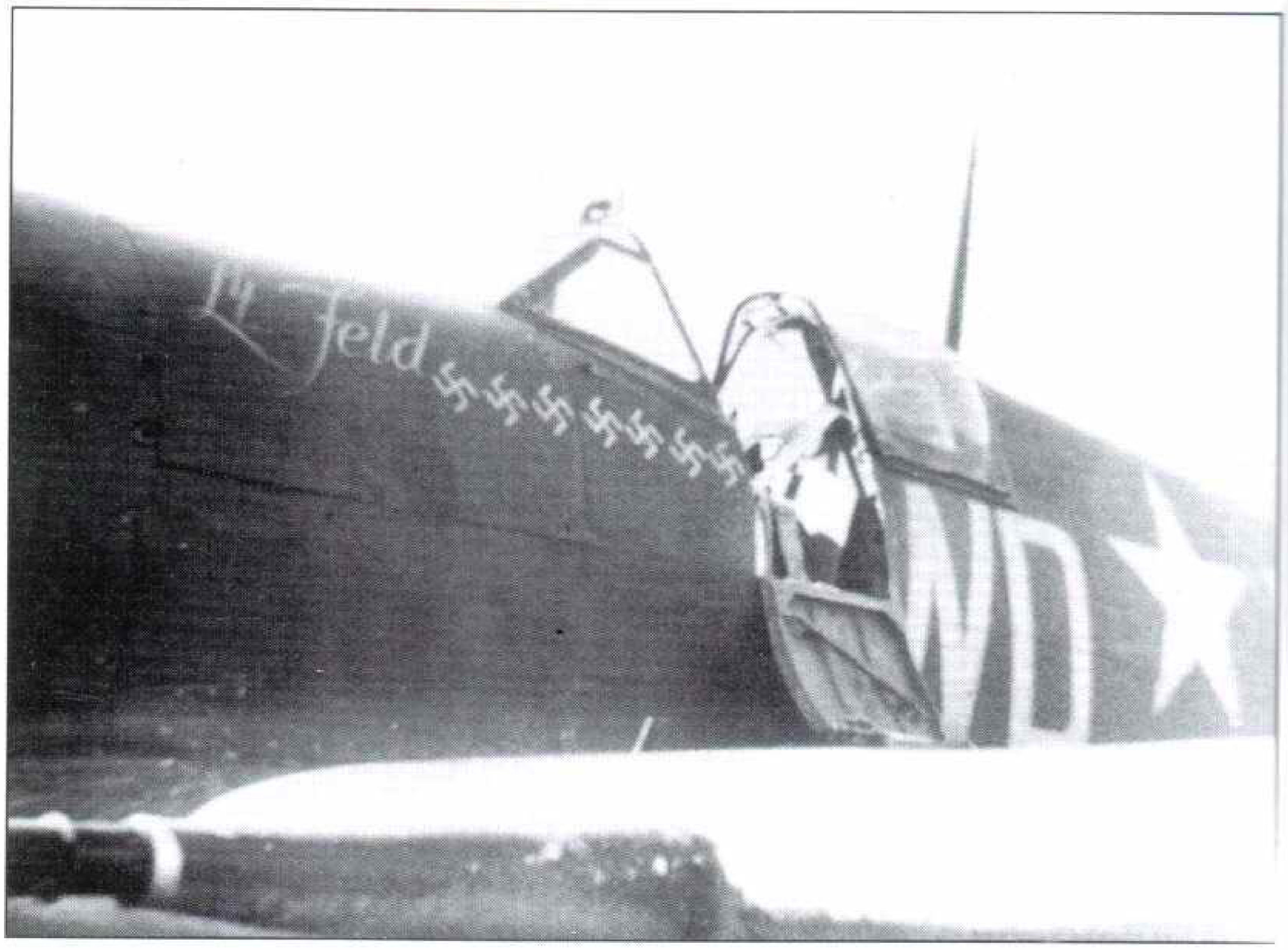
On 8 January 1943, Captain Levine destroyed an Fw 190 over Bône and on the 13th, the 4th FS shot down two enemy aircraft. In early February the 2nd FS moved into Thelepte. However, on the 17th a German counteroffensive forced a hurried evacuation. Until 9 March, the Group's Headquarters was Telergma, Algeria. 2nd Lieutenant Victor Cabas scored his first victory on 2 February, on his way to becoming an Ace. Cabas, previously in the RAF, stayed in the Air Force and eventually retired as a Brigadier General.

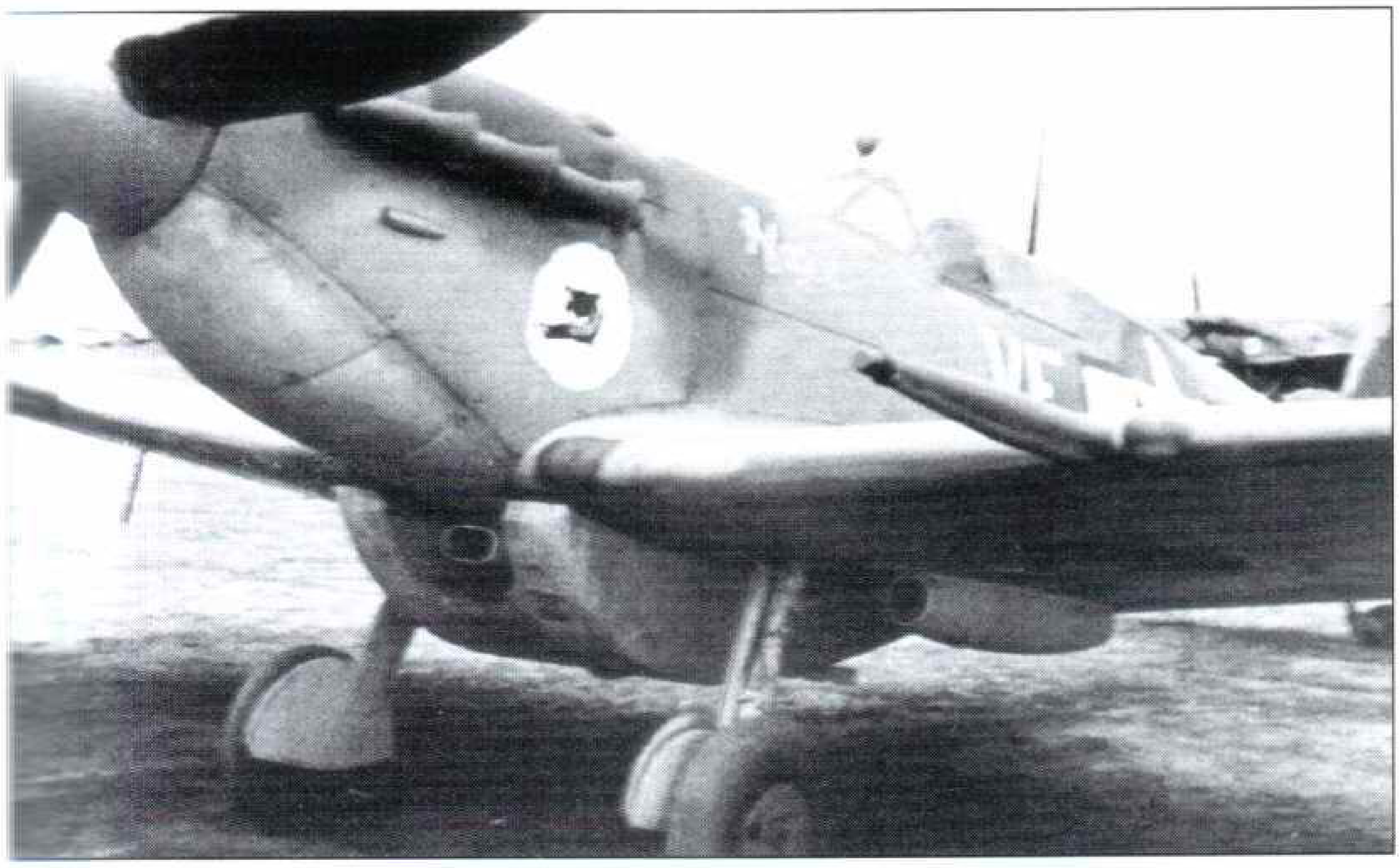
On 1 March, Lt. Colonel West became Group C.O. and early that month General Doolittle decorated some of the men at Telergma, recognizing the Group's success in battle. After the Germans were forced to withdraw from Thelepte, part of the 52nd FG moved back there on the 10th. Sometime in early 1943 the 52nd FG acquired some Spitfire Mk VIIIs and IXs but mainly it operated the Vc through



1st Lieutenant Sylvan Feld's Spitfire showing 7 kill markings. The photographer noted that the other two of Feld's nine kill markings were concealed by the open cockpit door. Feld was with the 4th FS and his last victory was on 6 June 1943, indicating that this photo was taken on or after that date. The small rod protruding from the wing is the undercarriage down indicator. (Blythe)

Feld was the highest-scoring American Spitfire ace, achieved his first victory on 4 January 1943, when he shot down a Bf 109. He was eventually credited with nine victories and scored six of these in April 1943. Feld's Jewish ancestry possibly accounted for his ferocity in combat with the Luftwaffe – this ferocity sometimes unnerved his squadron mates. (Blythe)





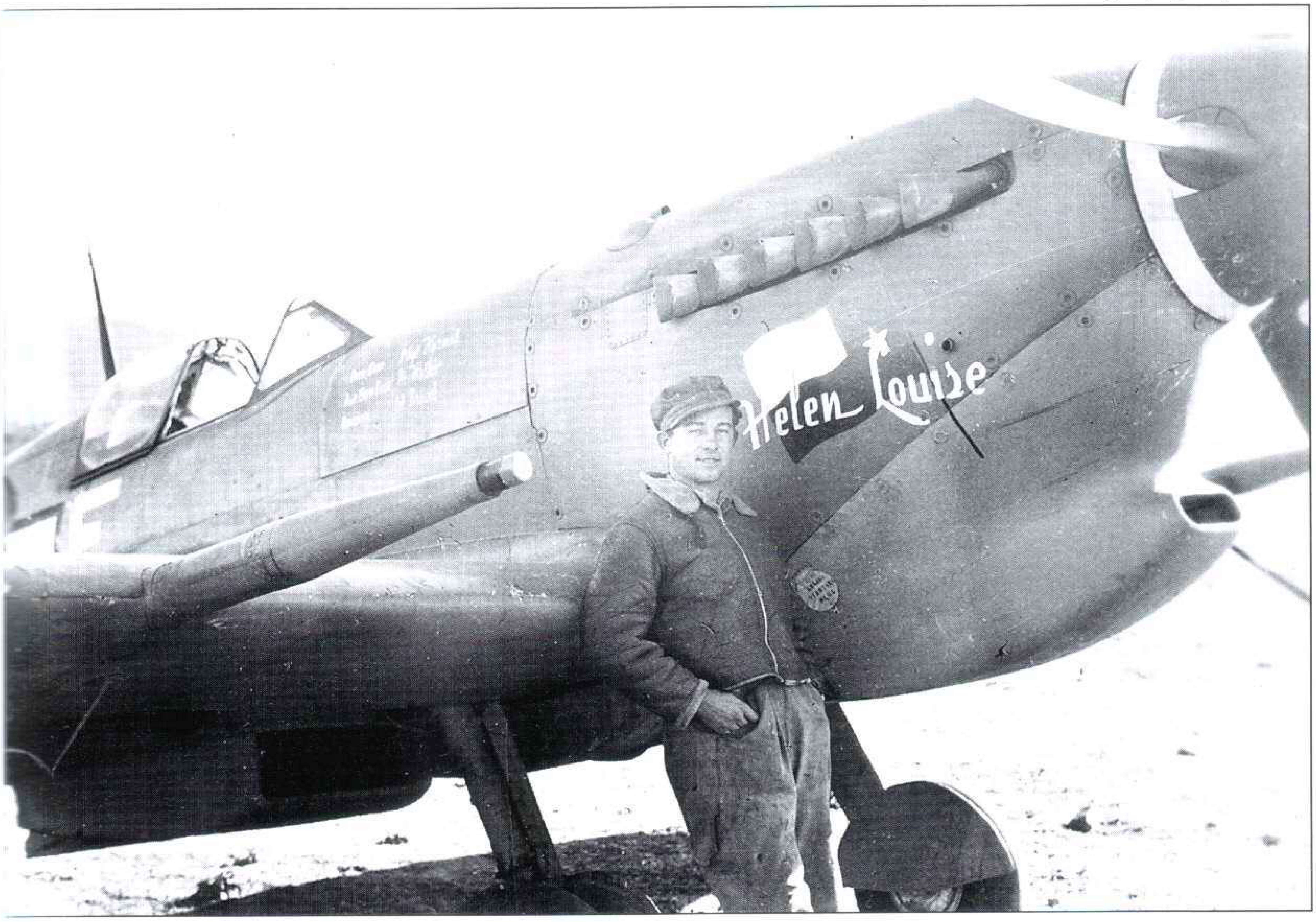
This Spitfire Mk Vc named 'Hazel' was flown by 2nd Lieutenant James H. Johnson of the 5th FS and has the squadron's 'Spittin kitten' badge. Note the 90 gallon drop tank. (Johnson)

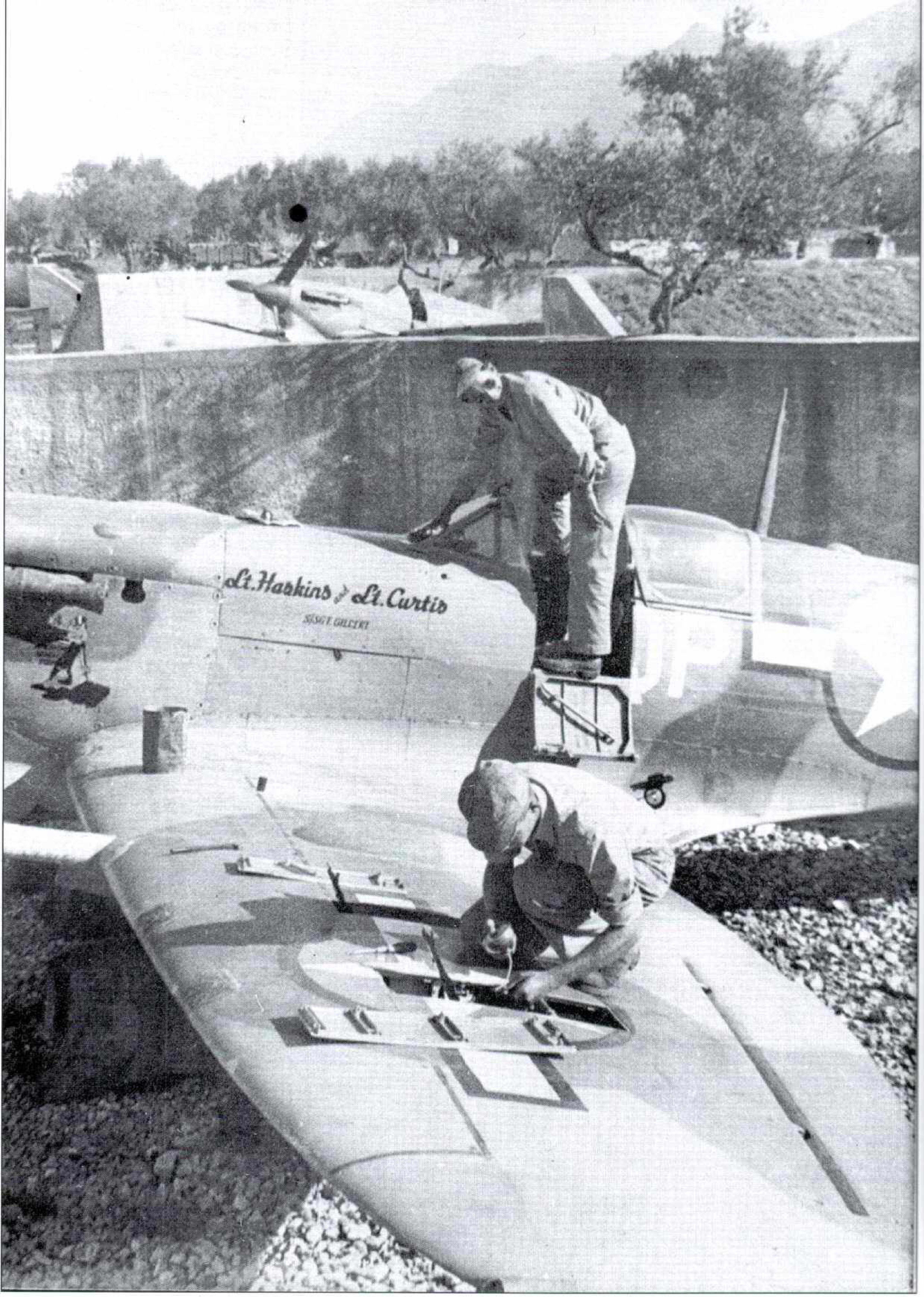
April 1944. On 22 March the Group had its biggest day so far with ne enemy aircraft being shot down for the cost of one pilot shot down d taken prisoner. Captain Norman McDonald got his first victory, the way to being credited with 7·5 kills, 2 probables and 4 damaged, in Spitfires. On 24 March, Lieutenant John W. Watson became the st 5th FS pilot to be credited with a victory, his only one.

In the Luftwaffe, certain fighter pilots attaining a high score of aerial ctories were known as *experten* by their comrades and whenever an *pert* was lost there was great consternation in the Luftwaffe. One such currence was described by Majors Bob Curtis and Lawrence Burke in eir published history of the 2nd FS entitled 'The American Beagle uadron.' On 23 March, Captain Theodore R. Sweetland of the 2nd S was killed when, in a dog-fight, he was warned to 'break'. He turned

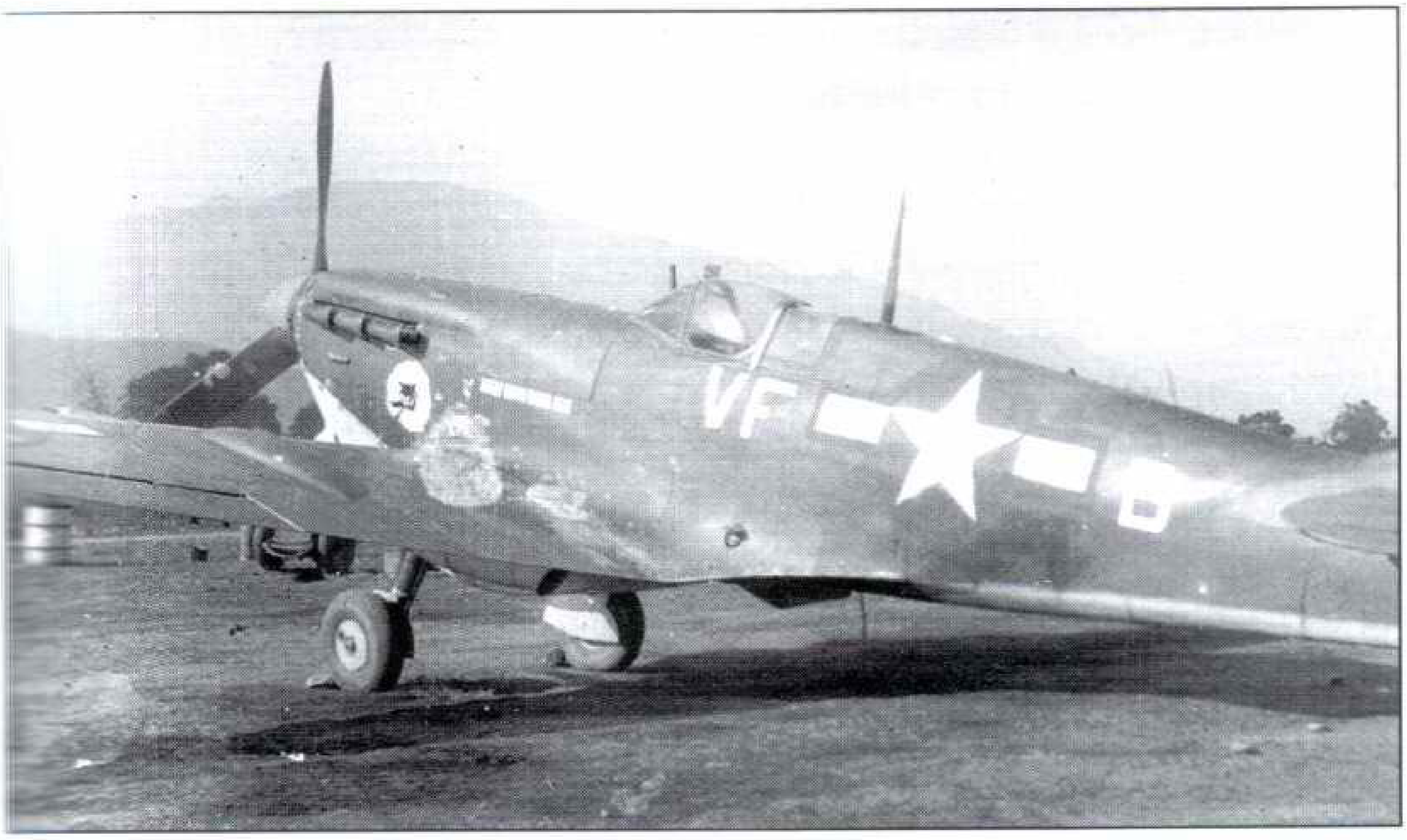
Sergeant Kormos of the 4th FS from Texas asked the squadron painter to paint this Texas flag and his girl friend's name on 1st Lieutenant John Blythe's Spitfire Mk Vc coded 'F'. Kormos was Blythe's Crew Chief and the date was February 1943, in North Africa. Kormos asked Blythe if he okayed the right-side marking, saying 'Sir, those Germans will think another country has declared war on them'.

Note the bulky air filter intake, six stack exhaust and the 52nd FG's common practice of removing the outer cannon bay stub on 'C' wings. (Blythe)





Lieutenants Marvin Haskins and Bob Curtis shared this Spitfire (almost certainly EP813 or ER815) in the 2nd FS while at Palermo, Sicily. Note the 'Beagle Squadron' insignia on the port cowling. Revetments with protective concrete barriers were a luxury seldom experienced in the 52nd FG. These ones are probably German-made. (Via P Ludwig)

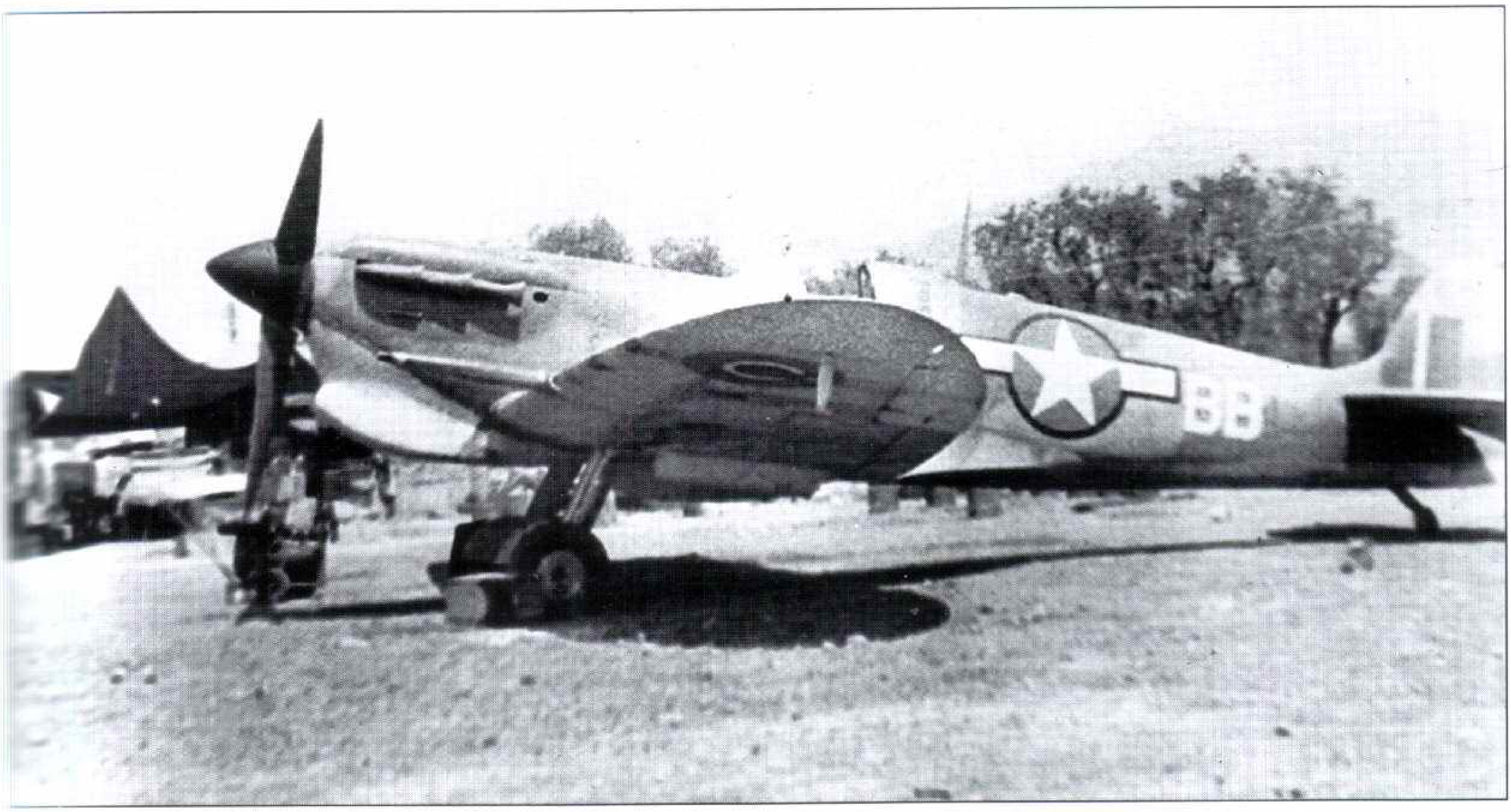


This 5th FS Spitfire Mk Vc exhibits bombing mission symbols and the later 12" code letters used by the 5th FS. It has a Temperate Land scheme of *Dark Green* and *Dark Earth*, with (probably) *Sky* undersurfaces. (Hahn)

hard right colliding head-on with the Bf 109 flown by Major Joachim Muencheberg, a Luftwaffe Ace with 134 victories. Both were killed and their aircraft crashed near El Sened. Pilots of the 2nd FS mourned the loss of Captain Sweetland.

On 24 March, three enemy were shot down by the 2nd FS, east of El Maknassy, Tunisia. While the 27th saw the 2nd FS and 4th FS escorting RAF Hurribombers attacking artillery. On 1 April seven enemy were shot down, including a Ju 88 near El Guettar by Lieutenant Bert Sanborn. Two days later the Group surpassed the big March 22nd total, when the 2nd and 4th FSs downed 13 Ju 87 Stukas. Captain Arnold Vinson, the first Ace of the 52nd FG, was killed in the fight. Captain McDonald of the 2nd FS got three of the Stukas and became an Ace by the end of April. Staff Sergeant James Edward Butler, 2nd FS, one of the last 'Flying Sergeants', shot down three Stukas and achieved Ace status on 9 April. The air echelon of the 2nd FS moved to Sbeitla on the 6th. On 9 April, seven Ju 88s were downed, including a kill by 1st Lieutenant Fred F. Ohr, a Korean-American fighter pilot. Ohr, (anglicised from Oh), had only one victory in Spitfires, but he did much better later in P-51s and rose to command the 2nd FS.

This weathered 2nd FS Spitfire Mk Vc carried a variety of markings, including an RAF underwing roundel and a fin flash. This photo has been taken on ortho film resulting in darker looking red areas. (Haskins)



On 11 April, pilots in a flight of Spitfires spotted a tank battle but when their observations were telegraphed to ground forces it was treated as unreliable. After further interrogation the pilots were believed, and the Allied army was made aware that its tanks had penetrated eastward farther than was realised from ground sources. The 52nd FG was commended by High Command for this action. The next day, the air echelon of the very active 2nd FS moved again, this time to Le Sers, Tunisia. On the 24th, Captain Levine of the 4th FS was awarded the Silver Star for actions over Tunisia. The 52nd FG had 50 victories by the end of the month, with the 2nd FS and 4th FS the most successful. The 5th FS was far behind, but the Group as a whole was highly regarded by senior commanders when in the face of the enemy.

Fate now intervened, to sideline the 52nd Fighter Group.

MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED COASTAL AIR FORCE (MACAF)

While in England the 52nd FG has been assigned to the USAAF XII Fighter Command of the 12th AF. From the day Operation Torch was set in motion, the 52nd FG was reassigned to assist 322 Wing RAF with the 2nd FS and 4th FS operating over Tunisia. As part of an Allied force, the USAAF naturally worked closely with the British, but the 52nd FG soon became responsible only to the RAF. On 23 May 1943 the 52nd FG was transferred to the RAF's Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force (MACAF) and from then, until April 1944, it did not operate as a fighter group. For almost a year, the 52nd FG was kept out of aerial combat, being employed in reconnaissance, convoy protection, harbour patrol and dive bombing roles. MACAF, as the name implies, was tasked with keeping the Mediterranean free of Axis shipping and safe for Allied

Crew Chief Lloyd Blough of the 4th FS, La Sebala in 1943. Blough invented an extra filter for the carburettor intake of a Spitfire IX. Here he stands proudly in front of his creation.

According to the photographer, Blough was never credited with the invention, but was given a citation from a British Air Marshal 'for a similar patent' which put an air filter on the boost aneroid that operated the supercharger at high altitude. (Via P Ludwig)

Major Bert Sanborn, C.O. of the 2nd FS, was one of the most personable and accomplished fighter pilots in the 52nd FG. He is pictured here at Palermo, Sicily, August 1943, the month he took command of the squadron.

Note the 'American Beagle Squadron' insignia under the exhaust stacks on this Spitfire Mk Vc. (J Fawcett) ipping. The 52nd FG was not employed again as a fighter group until ansferred to the 15th AF where it operating P-51 Mustangs.

From activation in England in November 1942, until 23 May 1943, e 52nd FG recorded 88·3 enemy aircraft shot down – a most successful hter group. However, from 23 May until 31 December 1943 the Group corded only 26 aerial victories.

Some of the first thoughts of feeling unwanted by either the USAAF, the RAF, among pilots of the 52nd FG, occurred during Operation ax in April 1943, when Allied fighters massacred Luftwaffe and Italian ansport aircraft flying supply missions to the beleaguered Afrika Korps. he battle was the preserve of RAF Spitfire Squadrons, South African r Force P-40s and USAAF P-38s and P-40s. Four hundred Axis ansports and some escorting fighters were shot down for only 35 losses. S. Spitfire groups did not participate and in their book on the 52nd G Curtis and Burke quote veterans who deplored the way they were eated by both the USAAF and RAF. When based at Bône, units of e 52nd FG were only thirty miles from enemy territory but weren't signed to Operation Flax and the easiest pickings of the air war in rth Africa. The men of the 52nd FG felt shunned.

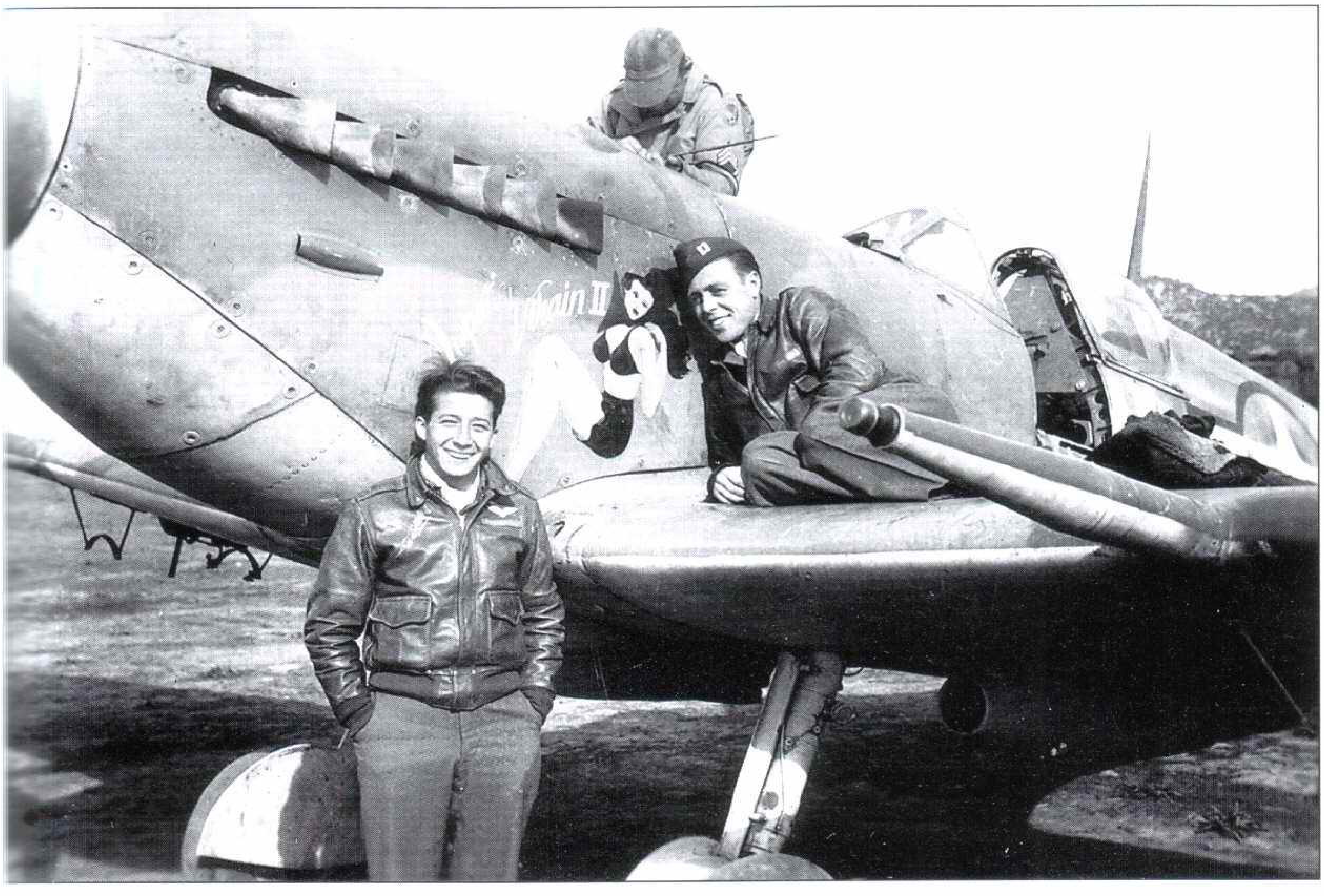
The USAAF was apparently reluctant to publicise the Group because perated British built Spitfires and it wanted American made P-40s d P-38s to enjoy the limelight.

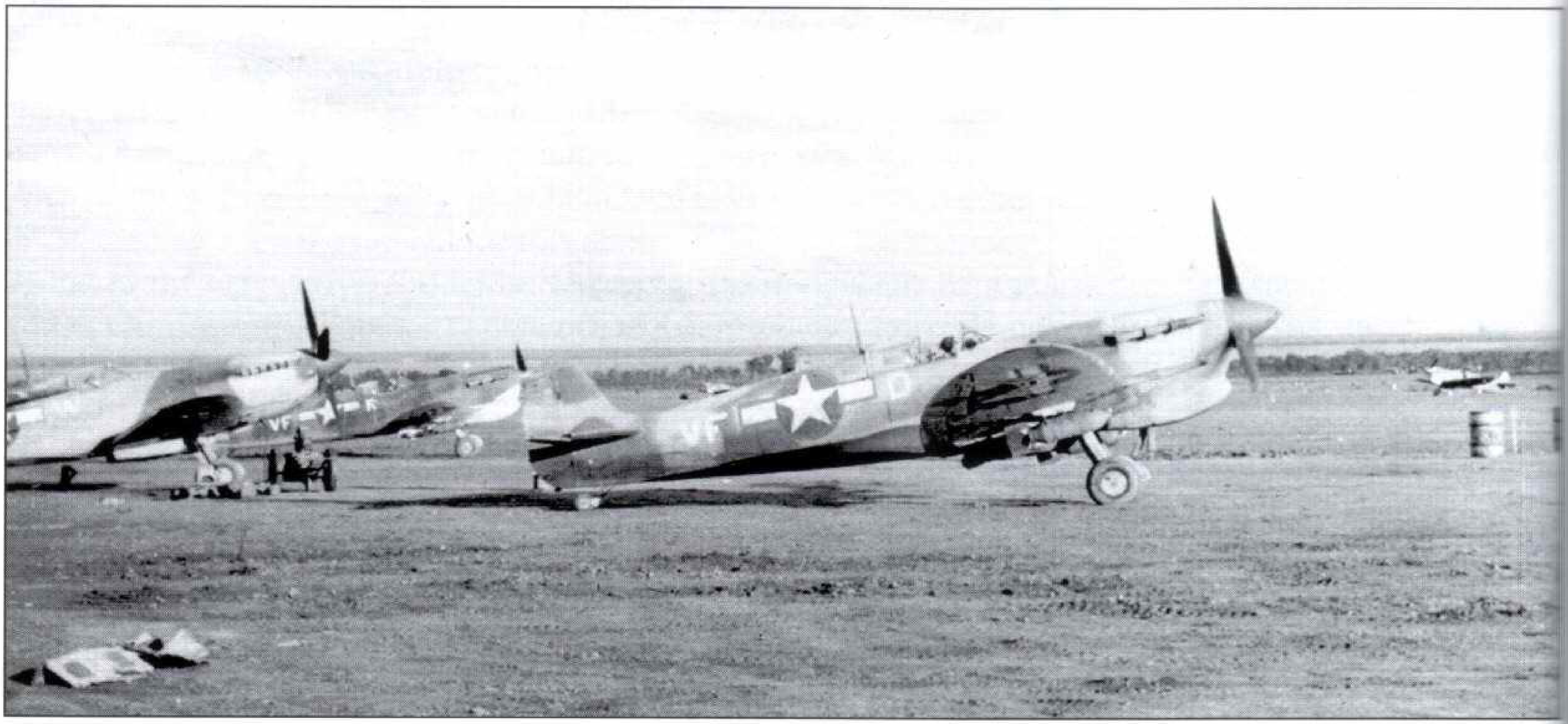
VICTORY IN NORTH AFRICA

e North African campaign ended in an Allied victory on 13 May 43 and the 52nd FG moved to La Sebala northwest of Tunisia on the rd, staying until 30 July. While other units continued the air war, e 52nd FG did not participate in the air bombardment of the island Pantelleria, or advance with the 31st FG to the island of Gozo near

Flying Officer James H. Montgomery of the 4th FS named two Spitfires 'Impatient Virgin' because he was impatient to shoot down an enemy aircraft. This was the second, a Spitfire Mk Vc, shown on Corsica. Captain John K. Blythe is on the wing.

Note the crude bomb rack and Spitfire Mk IX style six stack exhaust. (Blythe)

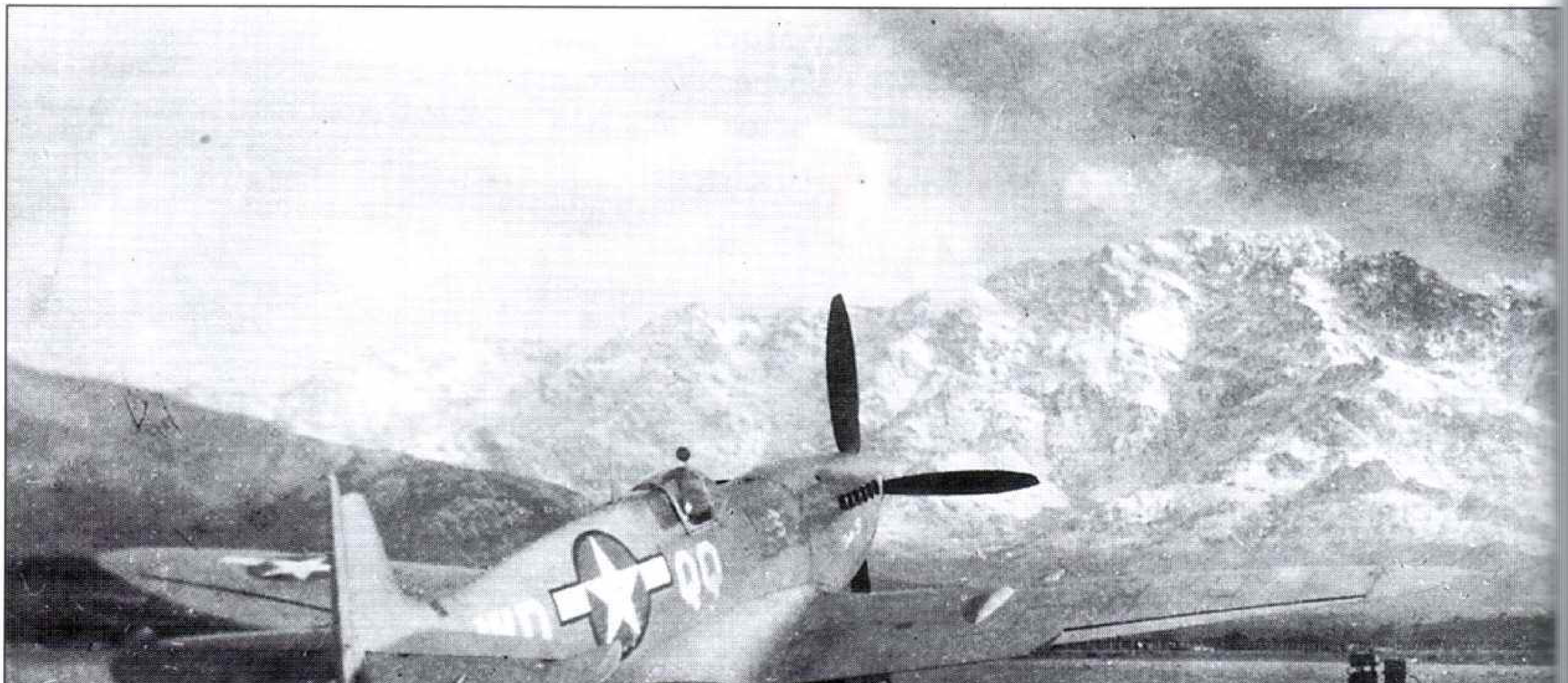




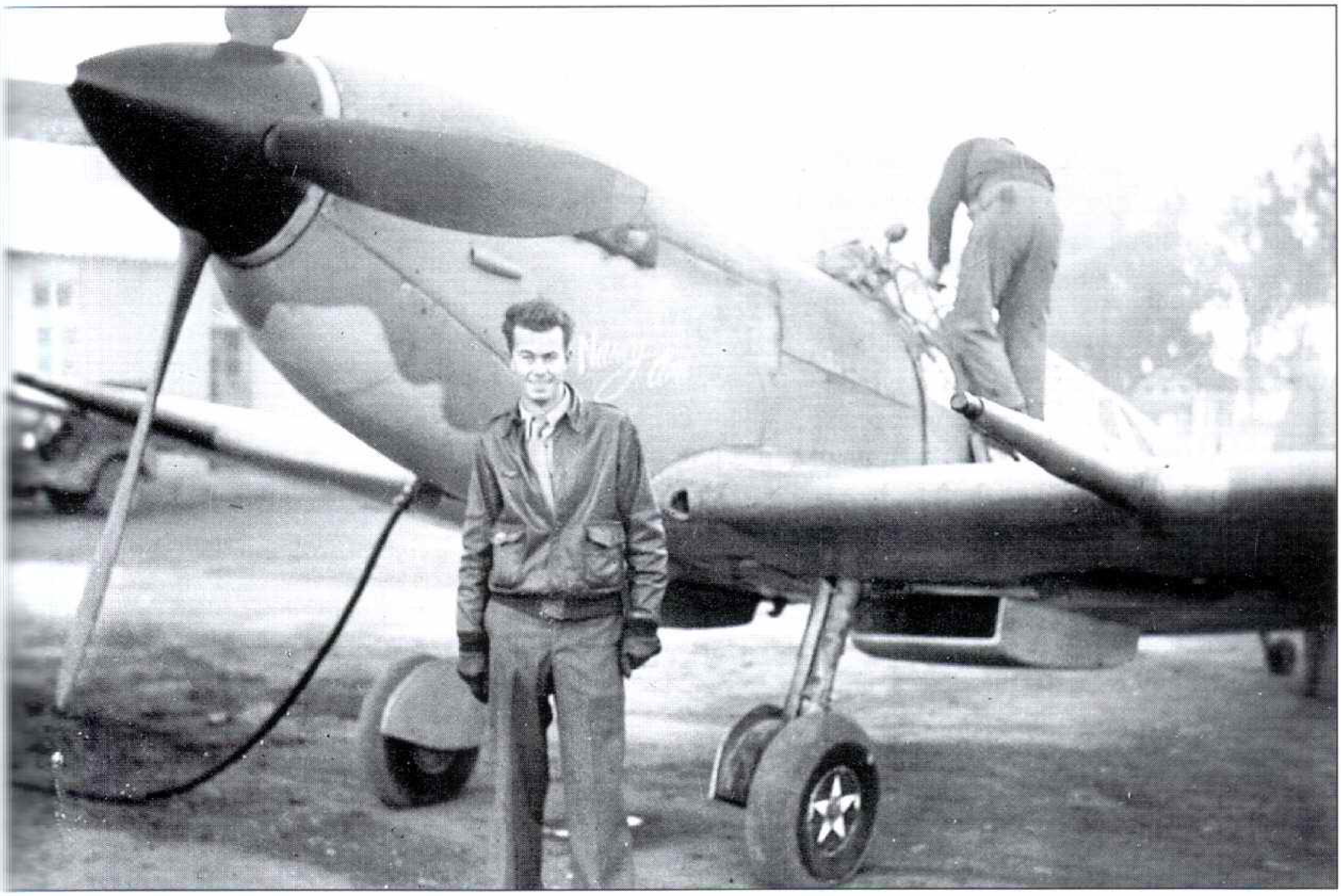
In the foreground is a Spitfire Mk Vc of the 5th FS armed with bombs prior to a sortie. To the left is a Spitfire Mk IX and in the background a Mk Vc 'VF-K' in a *Dark Green* and *Dark Earth* Temperate Land scheme, with either *Sky* or *Light Mediterranean Blue* undersurfaces. (F Sherman)

Malta from where that Group flew combat over Sicily. MACAF instead assigned the 52nd to convoy and harbour patrols. Not until December, 1943 did combat flying resume, and then only in a dive bomber role. On 11 June the campaign for Pantelleria began. The island was bombed into submission and the garrison surrendered. Captain James Tyler got his first victory on the 12th, northeast of Pantelleria over the sea.

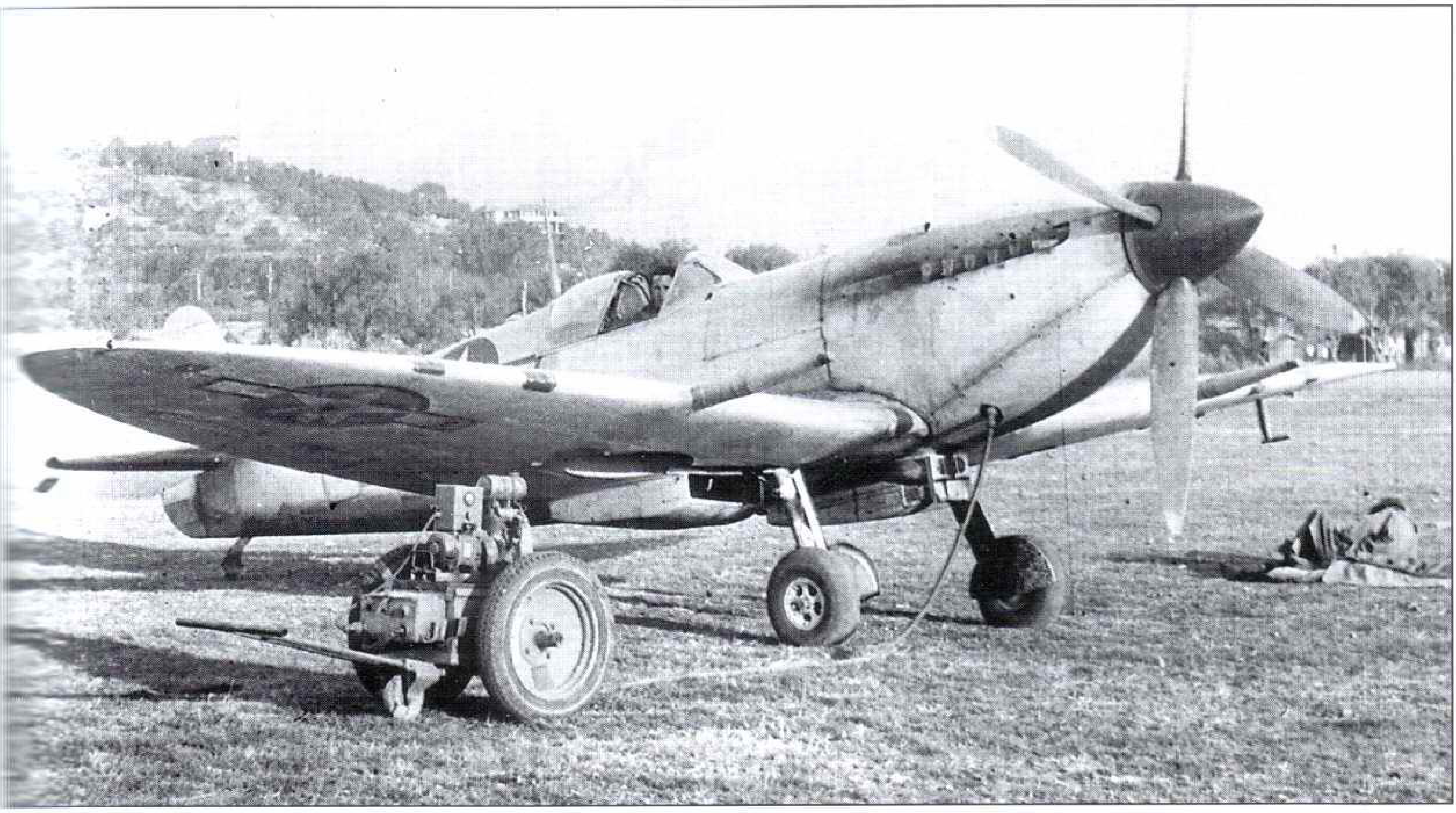
At La Sebala on 17 June, when the King of England, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and General Charles De Gaulle visited the base,



A 4th FS Spitfire Mk IX on alert in Corsica. It wears a one-colour uppersurface scheme which could be either the High Altitude scheme or light brown. See appendix 4. (Via P Ludwig)



An interesting photo of an early production Spitfire Mk IX of the 4th FS, named 'Nancy Ann'. It appears to have been repainted at unit level, probably in overall brown upper surfaces and light blue undersurfaces. Note the star on the wheel hub. Location is unknown. (Blythe)



This Spitfire Mk IX exhibits a field applied scheme as recalled by the photographer. 'The aircraft was a mottled light brown on the top blended into a light sky blue on the underside.' The scene is at La Sebala and the pilot, 1st Lieutenant James W. Puffer of the 4th FS, is on alert with the start cart plugged in and his Crew Chief ready, under the port wing. According to the photographer, 'our policy at that time was to have two pilots strapped into their aircraft ready to take off at the signal of a red flare. Six more pilots were in our ready tent with a jeep available.' Note the special filter on the carburettor intake. (Blythe)

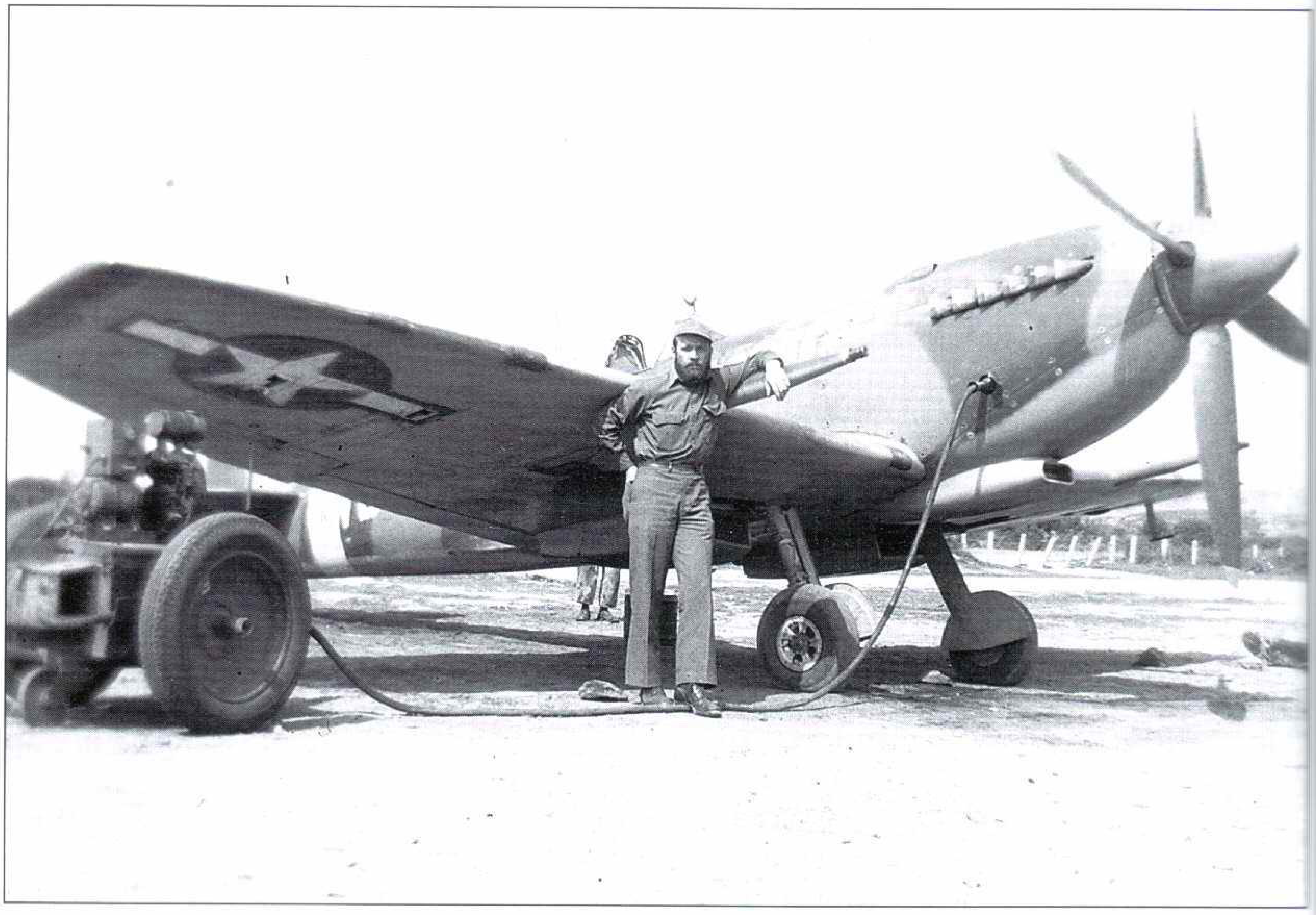
the King presented Lt. Colonel Coward with the British DFC. He was the only American in the MTO to be awarded this decoration. News of the event was the first about the 52nd FG to reach the American Press and mentioned USAAF use of Spitfires.

While at La Sebala, the 2nd FS gave itself the name 'The American Beagle Squadron' in a humorous twist on the name of the more famous RAF Eagle Squadrons.

As if being a fighter group rarely engaged in aerial combat wasn't causing enough consternation, a tragedy occurred at La Sebala around 20 June when a grass fire spread to an abandoned German aircraft. 'Windy' West, 1st Lieutenant Howard H. Brians and Sergeant Bernard Schreiber tried to extinguish the blaze, but a heavy calibre shell in the wreckage exploded. Brians and Schreiber were killed and Lt. Colonel West was so badly injured that he had to have both legs amputated. Coward subsequently became Group C.O.

1st Lieutenant Robert E. Armstrong of the 4th FS took off in a Spitfire Mk IX on 8 July to intercept a Ju 88 flying a reconnaissance mission at 35,000 feet west of Bizerte. He managed to shoot it down but his windscreen had been hit by return fire and his oxygen mask was smashed. Armstrong was blinded by fragments of glass and he bailed out at 35,000 feet, pulling his rip cord at low altitude. Ironically, Armstrong and one of the Ju 88 crew members lay in the same hospital and the German gave Armstrong his pistol. The story made the U.S. newspapers – a rare example of publicity for a USAAF Spitfire pilot.

Lt. Colonel Graham 'Windy' West, who was appointed to command the 52nd FG on 1 March 1943, photographed at Thelepte #2. (R Levine)



Sergeant Bob Klug of the 4th FS, poses with a clipped-wing Spitfire IX in March 1944, Calvi, Corsica. Note the *Sky* band around the fuselage which indicates this Spitfire is in the England-based RAF Day Fighter scheme (*Dark Green*, *Ocean Grey* and *Medium Sea Grey*). Usually the *Sky* band on these aircraft was overpainted with camouflage in the MTO. (R Klug)

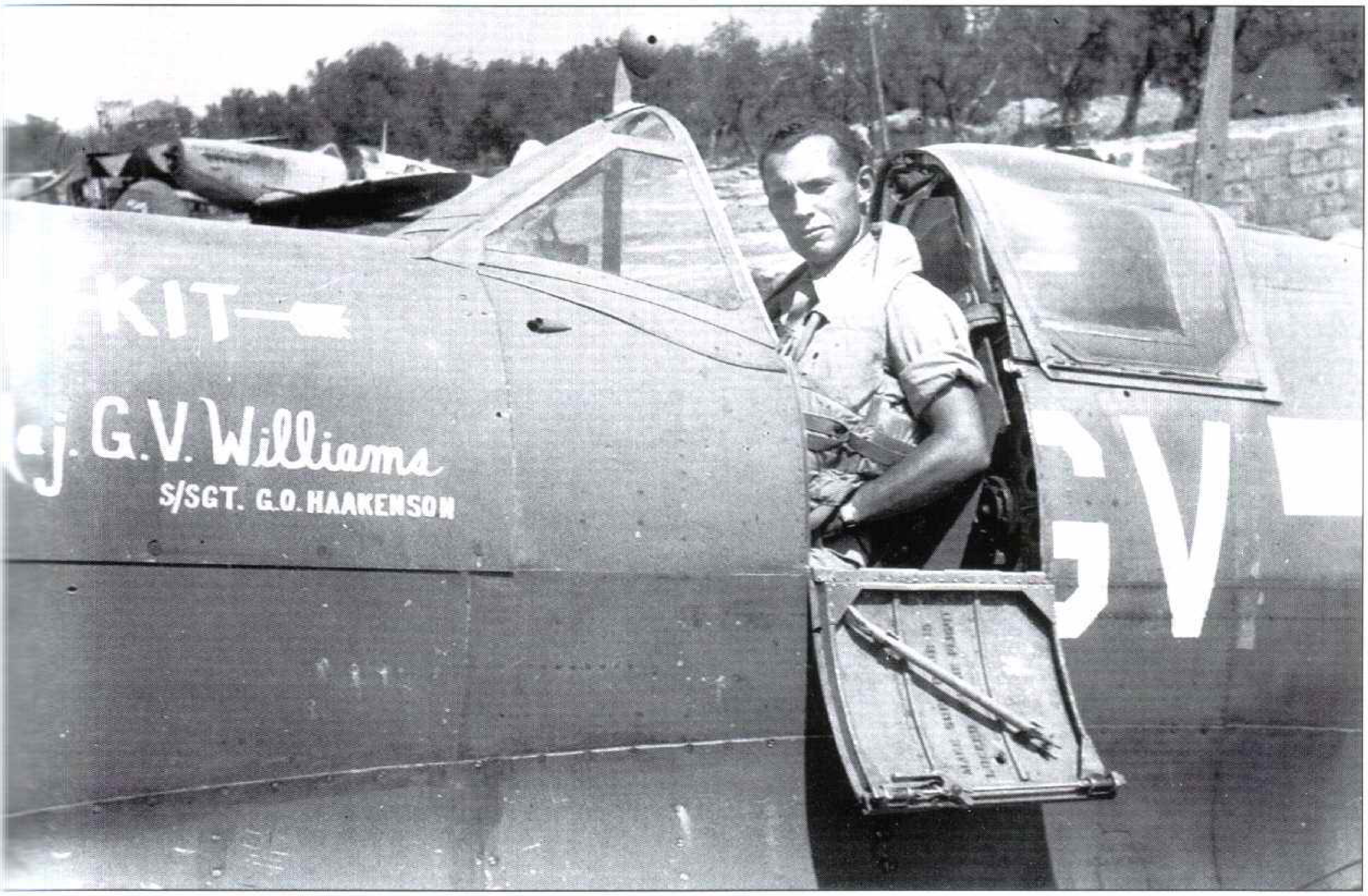
SICILY

On 9 July 1943, the Allies invaded Sicily. The 52nd FG could not participate in covering the landings because their Spitfires lacked the range to fly to Sicily and return to La Sebala. Palermo, Sicily was taken by ground troops on 23 July and the air echelon of the 2nd FS moved to the airfield at Bocca di Falco near Palermo on the 30th, with the ground crews following a short time later.

The Luftwaffe flew night nuisance raids over Bocca di Falco which often woke Captain McDonald, among others. McDonald was not exactly pleased and so he, and 2nd Lieutenant Norman E. English, concocted a plan to attempt a night interception in a Spitfire. McDonald and English were convinced the Luftwaffe would raid at the usual hour of [illegible] on 1 August. They had their ground crews use the headlights of two Jeeps as runway guides and when they heard two enemy bombers approach, the two took off. They used the dark harbour to fix their location and, finding two unsuspecting Do 217s, shot both down.

In early August, Major George V. Williams, commander of the 2nd FS, was replaced by Captain Sanborn and one of the more colourful pilots in the MTO, Richard L. 'Dixie' Alexander, joined the squadron.

In October 1943, the weather deteriorated and autumn rain transformed airfields into quagmires. Colonel Marvin McNickle* became 52nd Fighter Group C.O.

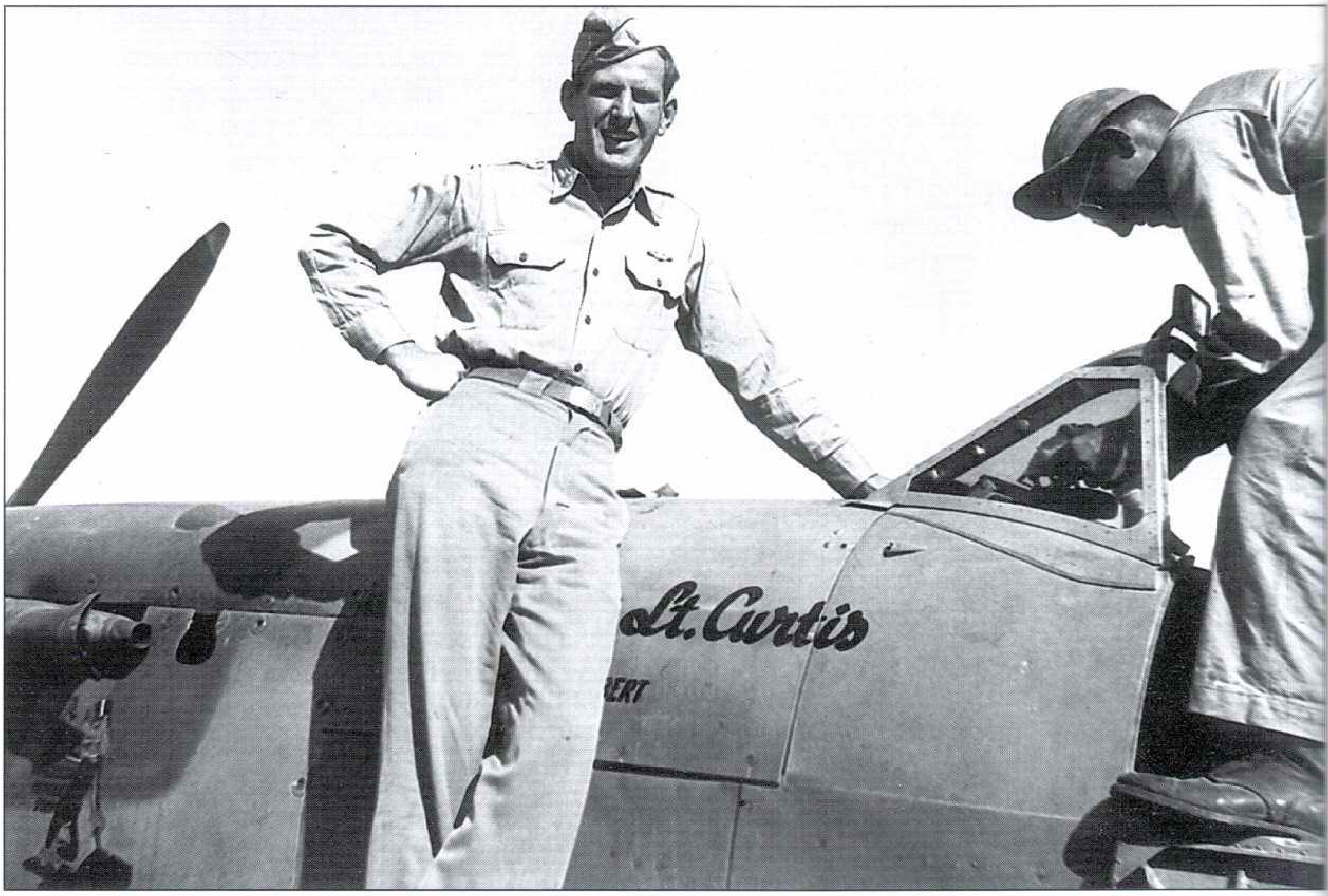


Few officers below the level of Group C.O. assumed the privilege of replacing the standard Squadron codes with their initials. But Major George V. Williams, who commanded the 2nd FS until August 1943, did just that. Crew Chief for 'GV-W' was Sergeant G.O. Haakenson. Note the emergency crow-bar clipped inside the cockpit door.

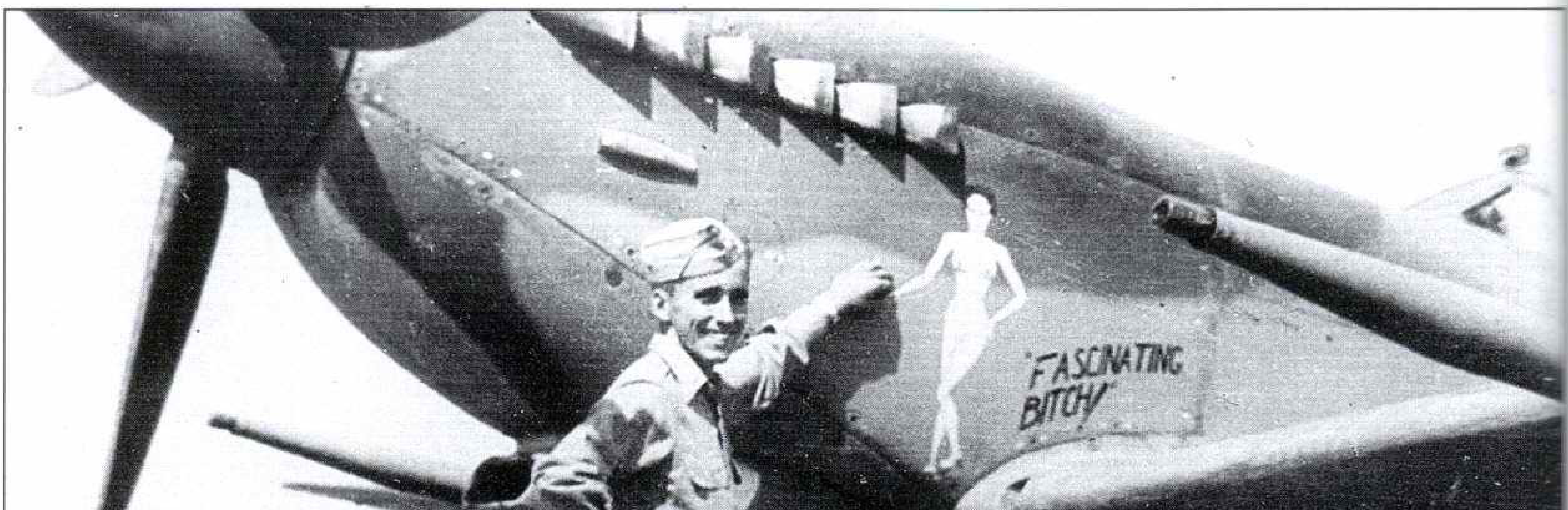
This machine wears either a non standard 'brown' scheme, or a Day Fighter (High Altitude) scheme. In the background is an even lighter coloured Spitfire with undersurfaces dark, relative to the uppersurfaces, indicating a Day Fighter (High Altitude) scheme. (Haskins)

---

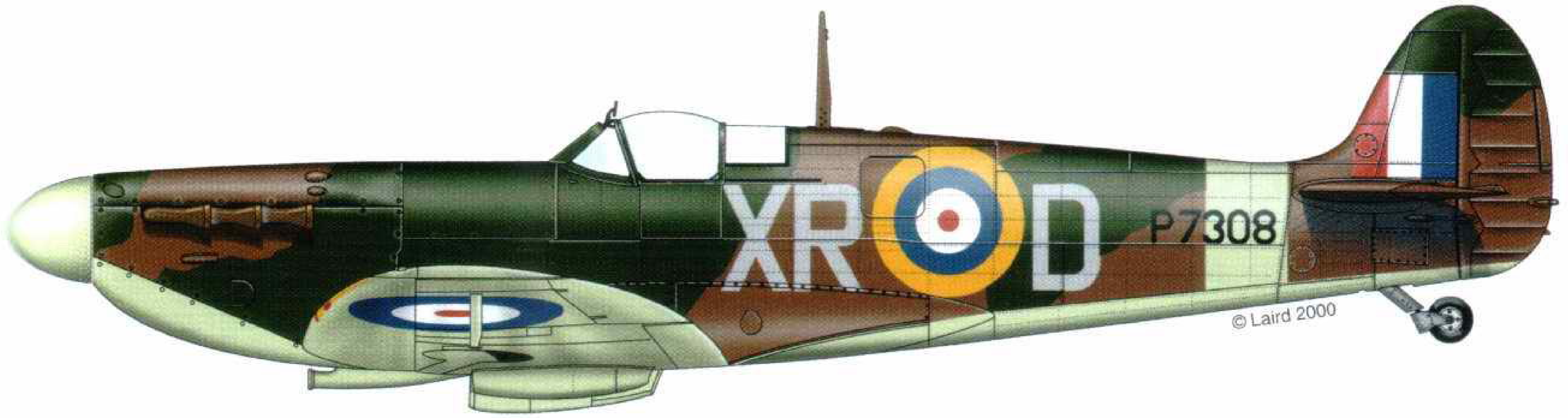
*See American Spitfire Camouflage and Markings, Part 1



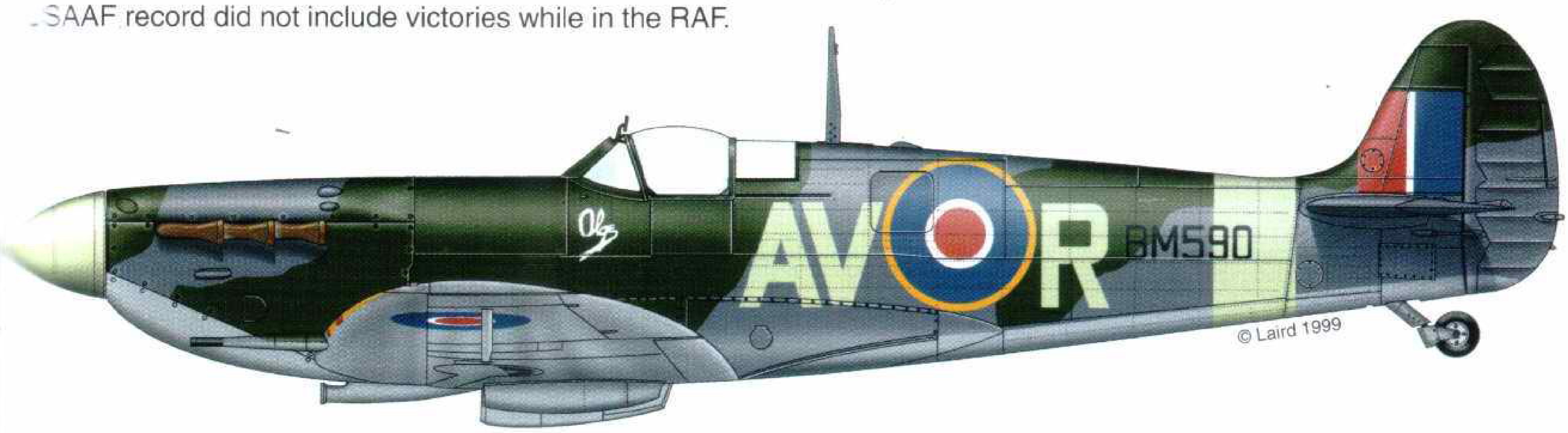
Lieutenant Bob Curtis of the 2nd FS in Sicily standing on a Spitfire Mk Vc. Later, as a Major, he commanded the squadron from April 1944, till October the same year. He achieved 14 victories, all in Mustangs. Another photo of this aircraft appears of page 24. (Haskins)


'FASCINATING BITCH!'

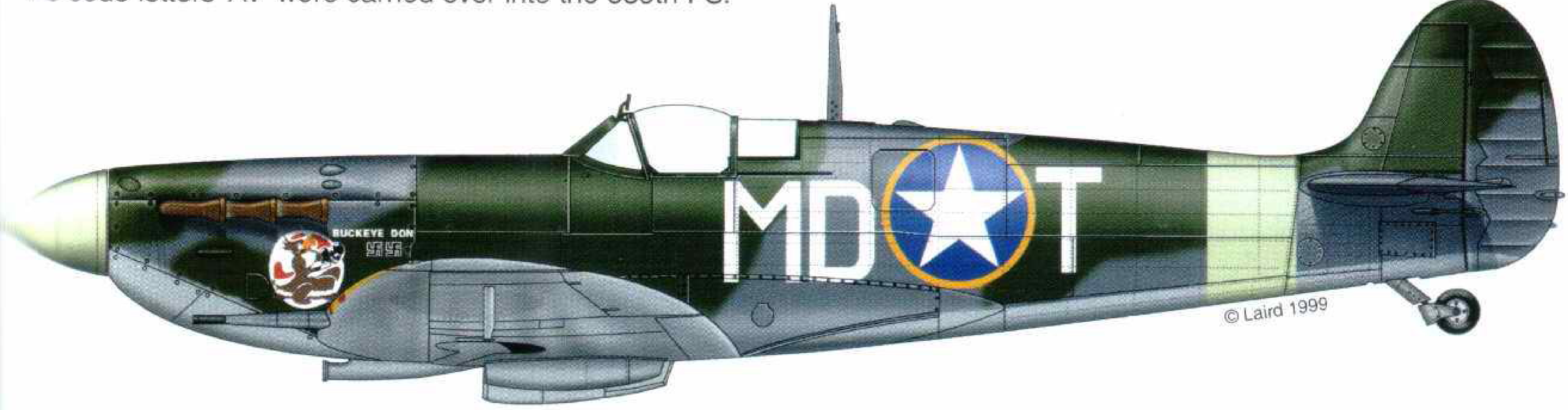
Captain Daniel J. Zoerb of the 2nd FS was a seven-victory Ace in Mustangs, but here he stands next to Flying Officer Albert R. McRaw's Spitfire Mk IX 'Fascinating Bitch !' on Sicily. Note the non standard grafted-on carburettor intake filter. (Ethel)


XR D
P7308
© Laird 2000

This 71 Squadron, RAF, Spitfire Mk IIA was one of the aircraft flown by William R. Dunn, America's first Ace of WWII. The USAAF credited Dunn with only one victory while he claimed five. The USAAF record did not include victories while in the RAF.

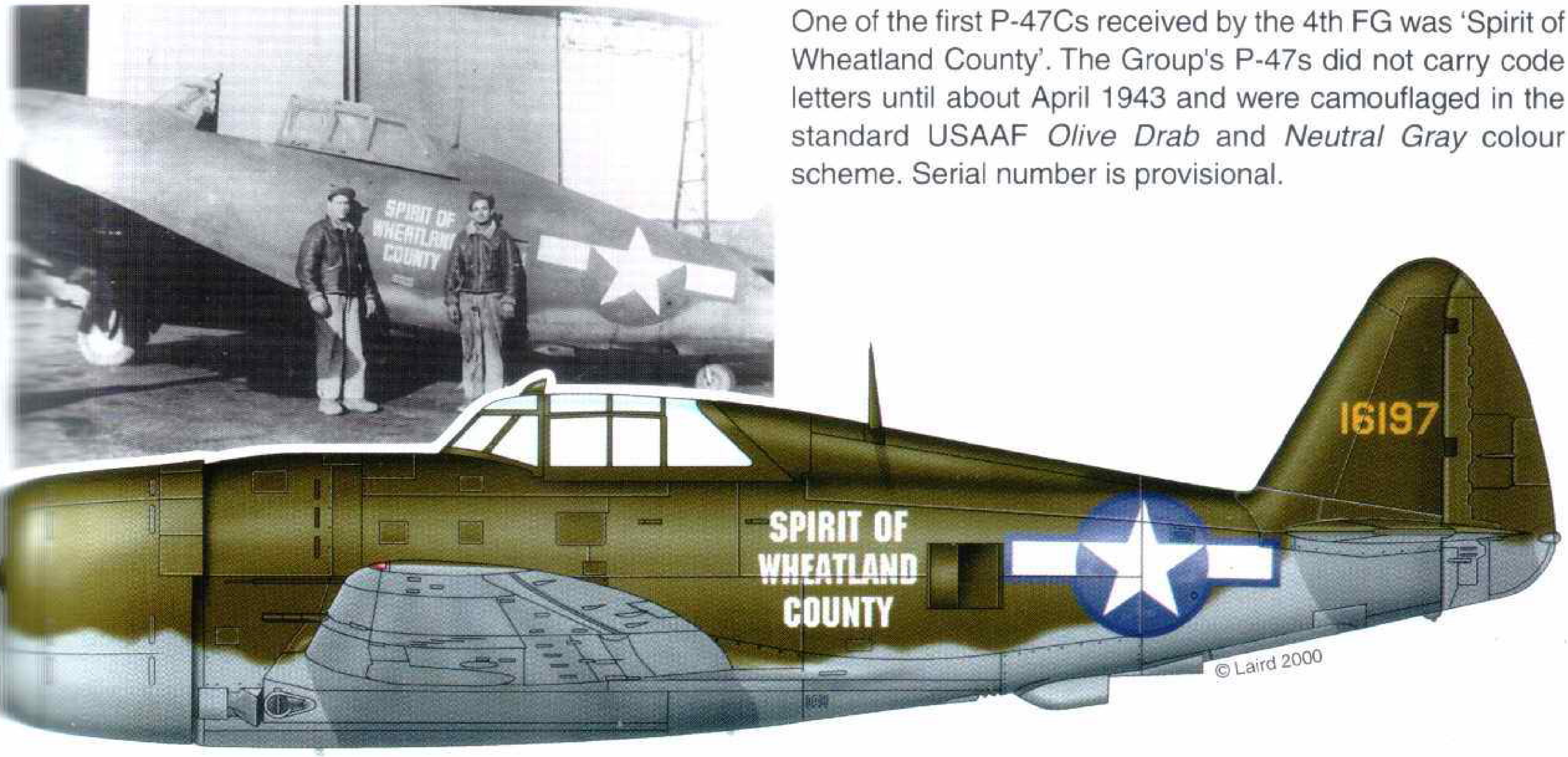

AV R
BM590
© Laird 1999

Spitfire Mk Vb, BM590, of 121 Eagle Squadron. When the Eagles became the 4th FG, the code letters 'AV' were carried over into the 335th FS.

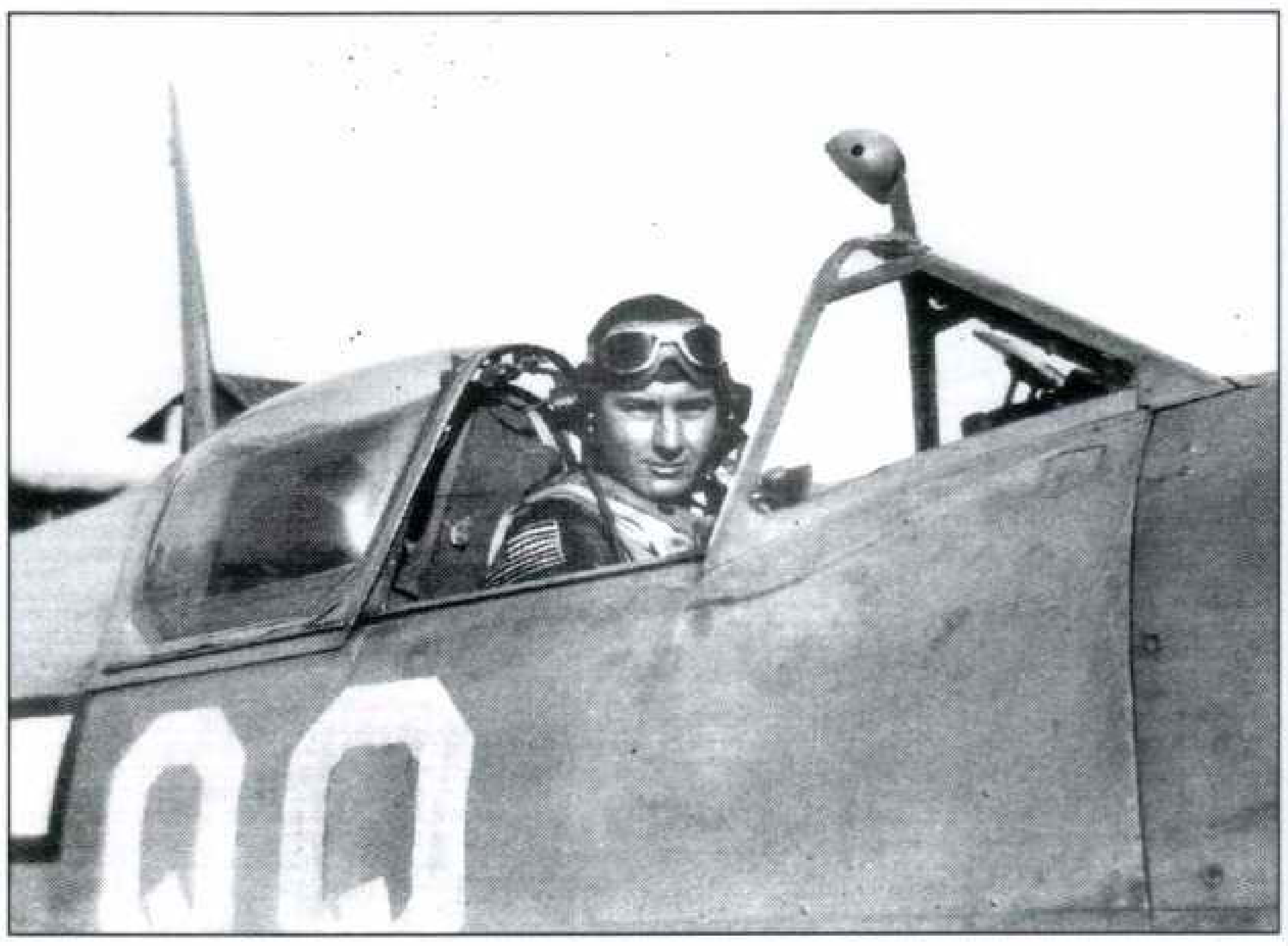

BUCKEYE DON
MD T
© Laird 1999

This Spitfire Mk VB was flown by Lieutenant Don Gentile of the 336th FS. The two 'kill' markings are for Fw 190s shot down during operations protecting the Dieppe landings.

One of the first P-47Cs received by the 4th FG was 'Spirit of Wheatland County'. The Group's P-47s did not carry code letters until about April 1943 and were camouflaged in the standard USAAF *Olive Drab* and *Neutral Gray* colour scheme. Serial number is provisional.


SPIRIT OF
WHEATLAND
COUNTY
16197
© Laird 2000

CORSICA



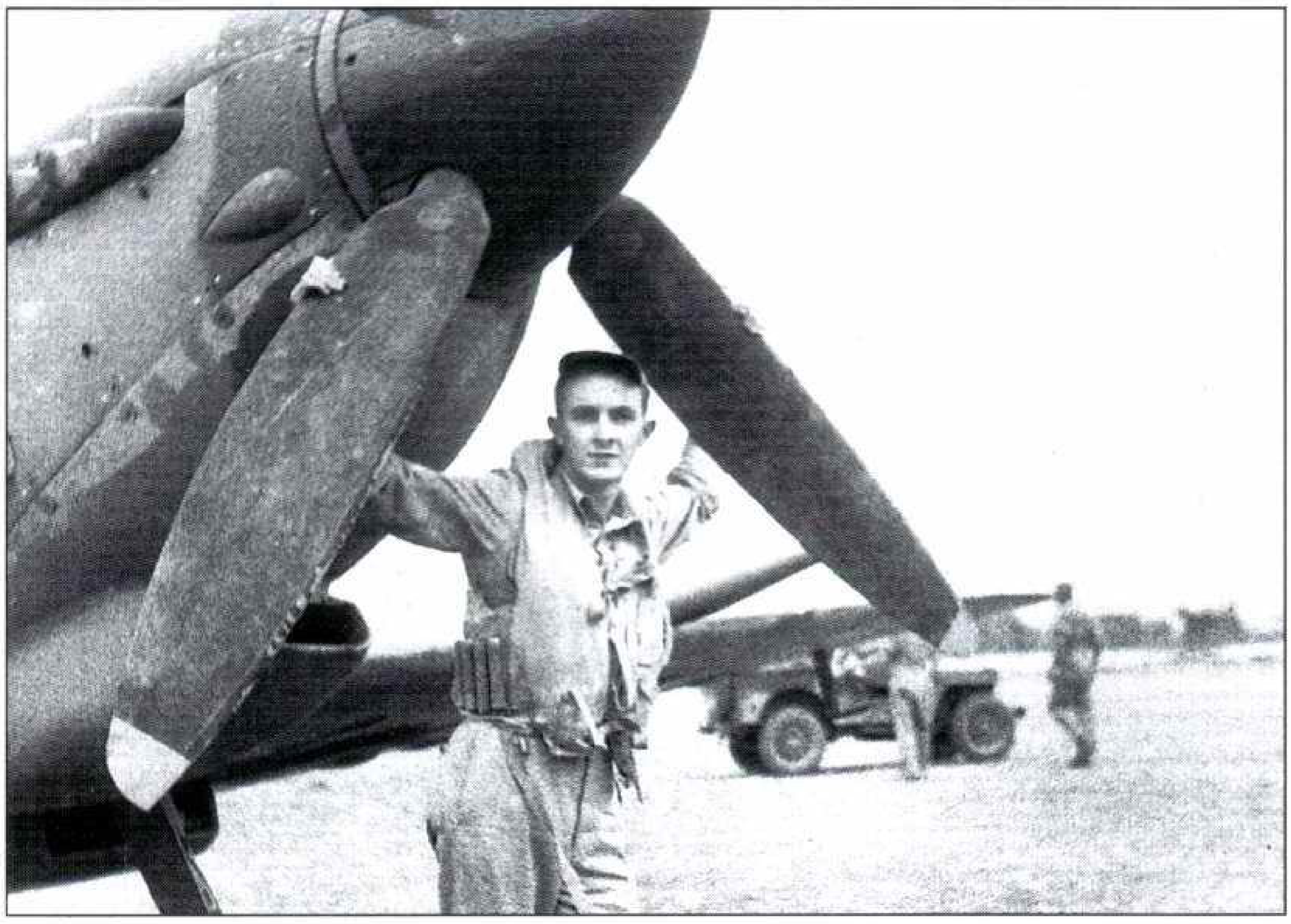
Few aviation enthusiasts today realise that the famous postwar aerobatics display pilot, Bob Hoover, flew Spitfires in the 4th FS. He is shown here in the cockpit of Spitfire Mk IX 'WD-QQ' on standing alert, January 1944, Calvi, Corsica. One month later he was shot down and taken prisoner. (R Klug)

In mid-November the Group moved out of Bocca di Falco. The 2nd and 5th squadrons flew into Borgo, Corsica, while the 4th FS moved into Calvi. Ground personnel and equipment were transported in by sea, on 1 December 1943.

Winter weather continued to hamper operations, but on 28 December Major Levine flew the first dive-bombing mission to San Vincenzo, Italy. These MACAF dive-bombing missions were continued all the way through into April 1944, when the Group went off operations to train on Mustangs. Dive bombing missions occasionally presented opportunities for combat. On 23 January 1944, 1st Lieutenant James W. Bickford was leading his flight on a dive bombing mission to Marina di Pisa, when they encountered 50-plus Junkers Ju 88s and Heinkel He 111s carrying torpedoes intended for Allied shipping. Seeing the enemy bombers were escorted only by Messerschmitt Me 210s, Bickford ordered the flight to jettison its bombs and attack the enemy aircraft. Bickford claimed two He 111s, 2nd Lieutenant Mike Encinias, two, 1st Lieutenant Bob Liebl and 2nd Lieutenant Arthur Johnson Jr. claimed one each. Johnson later became an Ace in P-51s.

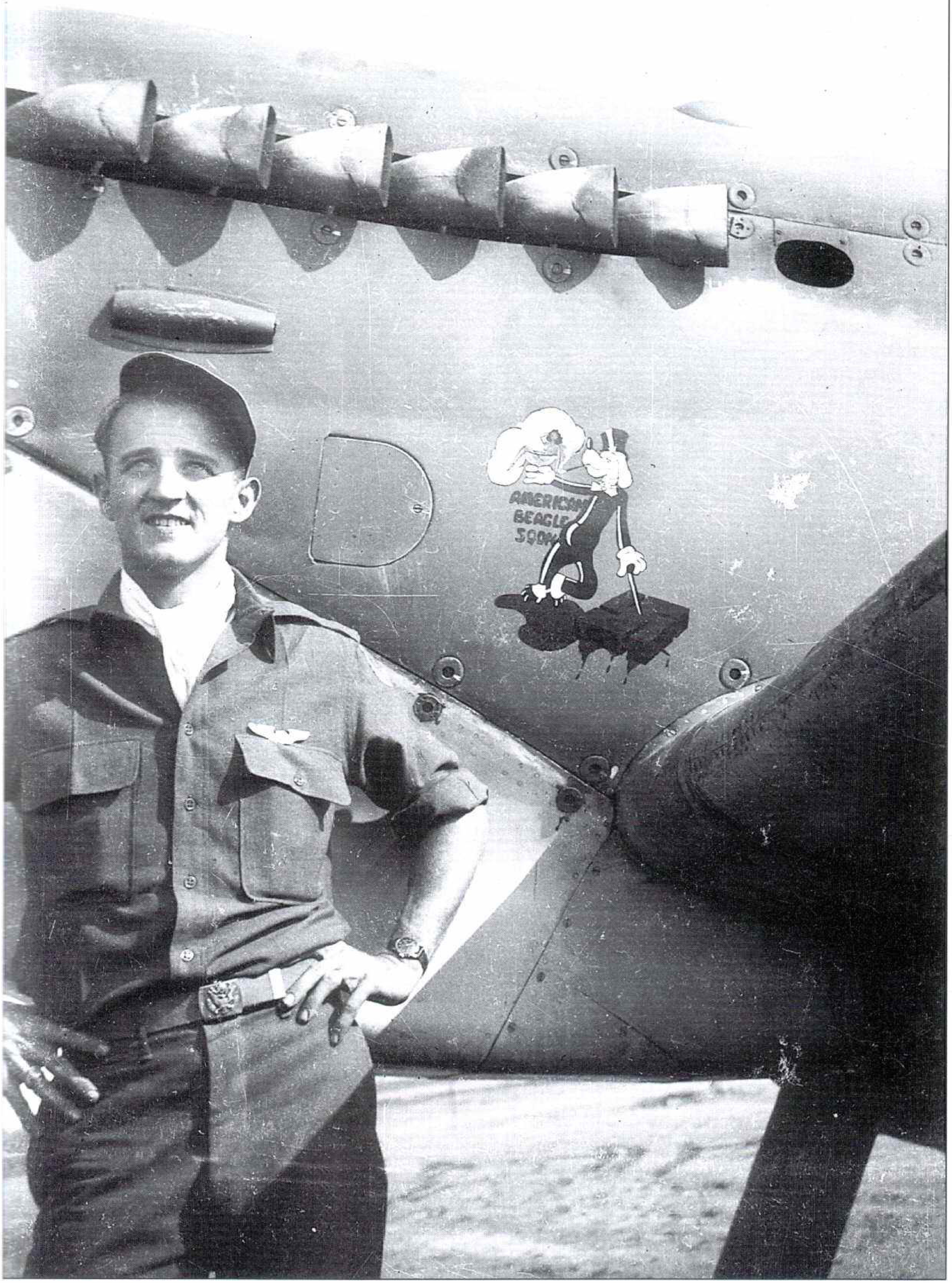
2nd Lieutenant Bob Hoover, famous as a test pilot and airshow performer post-war, arrived in the autumn of 1943 but on 9 February 1944 he was shot down and captured. For some reason he was never credited with his two victories claimed that same day.

On 6 February, a reconnaissance mission to La Spezia came across activity at a training base and the flight shot down a number of biplane and observation type aircraft, some towing gliders. This success drew a few smirks, because of the ease with which the victories came. (wrecked gliders were not counted as aerial victories). Things were less fortuitous on the 19th during an attack on an enemy fighter base at Viterbo. Four claims were made, but the Group lost two pilots shot down and taken prisoner. 1st Lieutenant Robert (Bob) Curtis got his first kill, a Bf 109 and later he became an Ace in Mustangs and post-war an author.

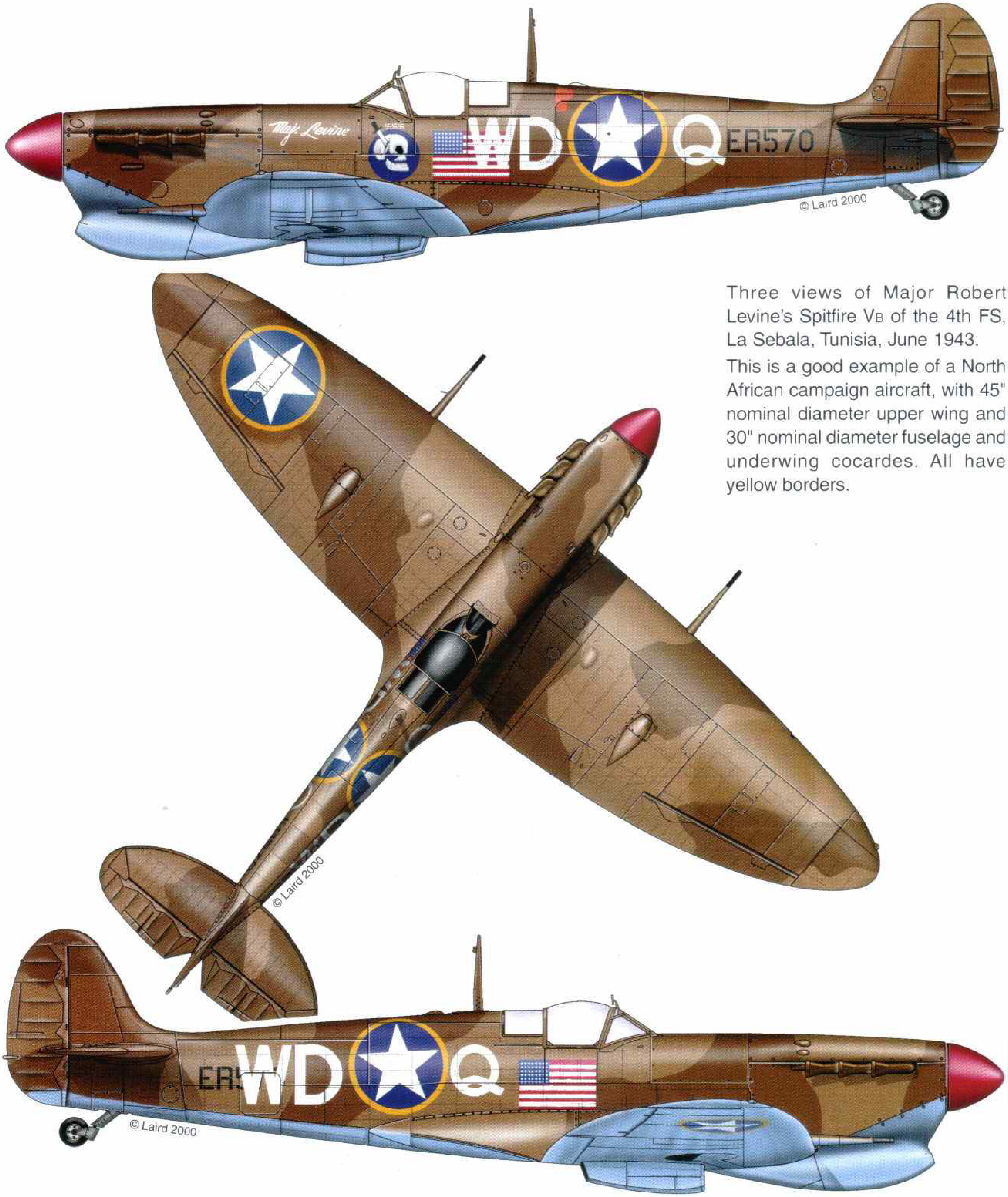


2nd Lieutenant James S. 'Sully' Varnell Jr., holds onto the prop of his Spitfire Mk VIII at Palermo, Sicily, sometime after he joined the squadron in September 1943.

Varnell eventually became the top Mustang Ace of the 52nd FG with 17 victories. (Haskins)

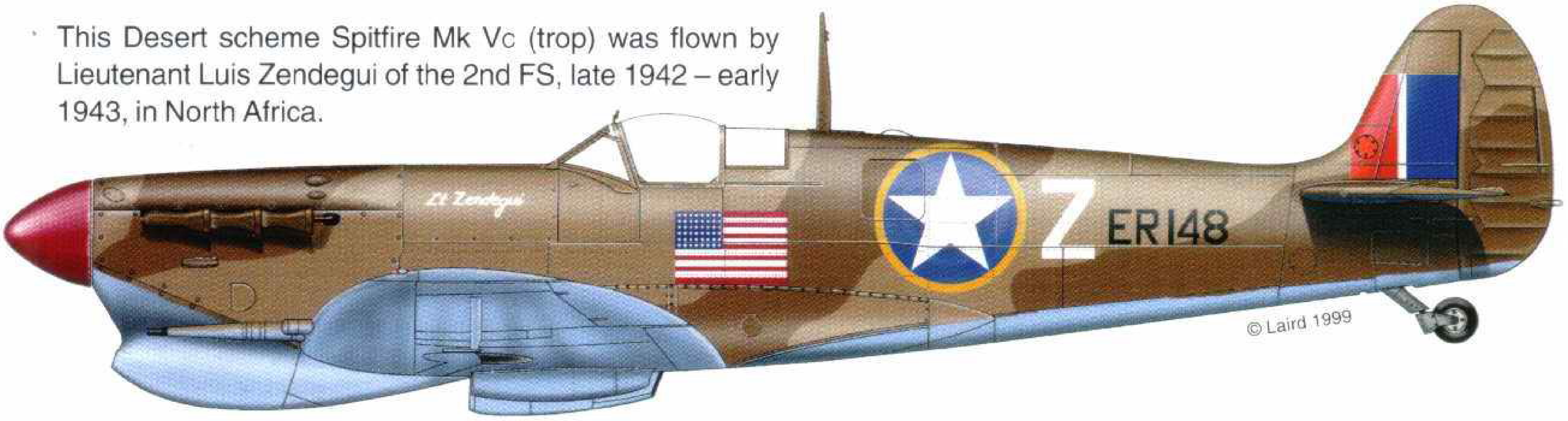

AMERICAN
BEAGLE
SQDN

The 2nd FS named itself 'The American Beagle Squadron' and its insignia is shown here with Lieutenant John Fawcett. Fawcett served with both the 31st and 52nd Fighter Groups. (J Fawcett)

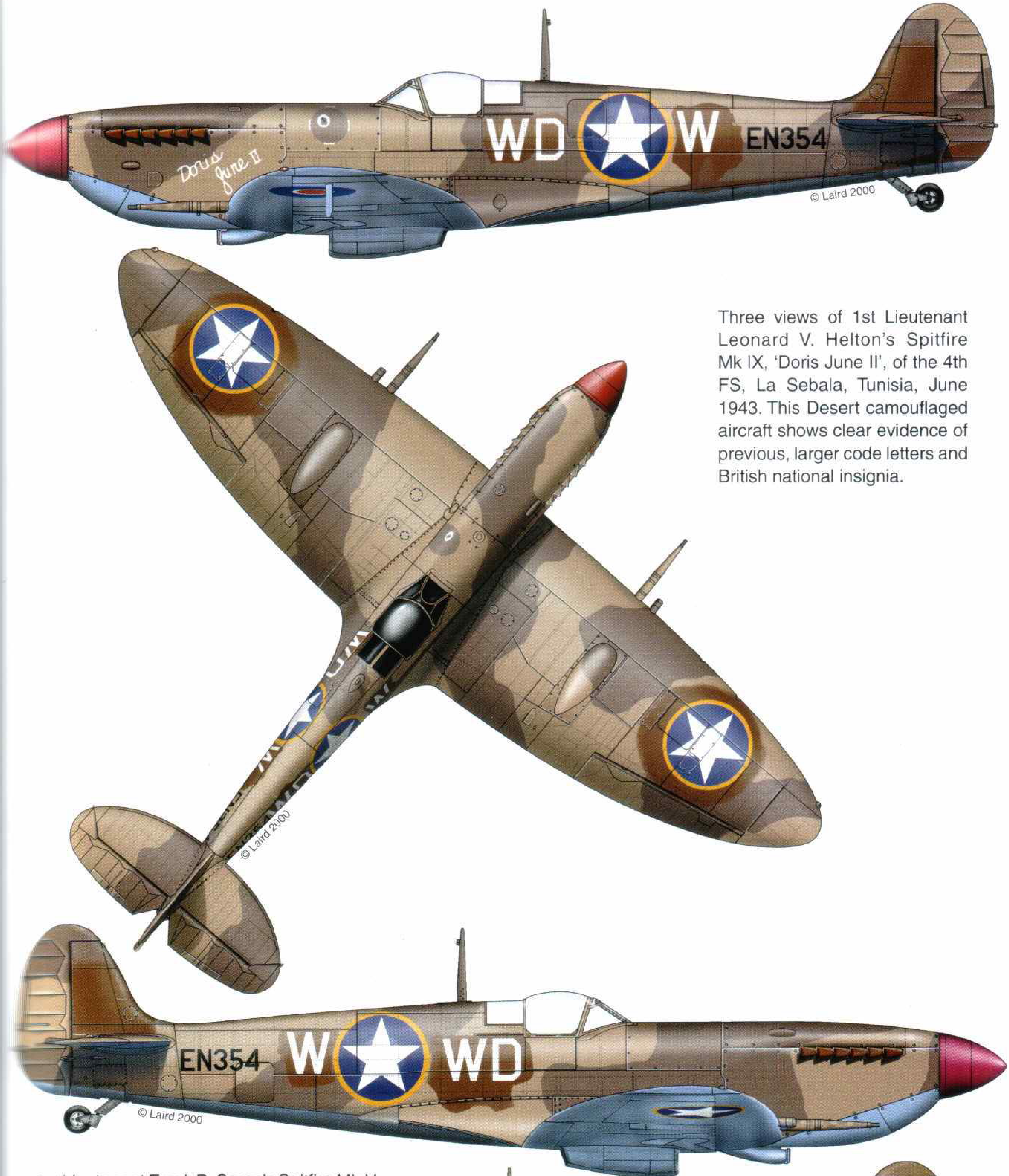

Maj Levine
WD
Q
ER570
© Laird 2000
© Laird 2000
ER5
WD
Q
© Laird 2000

Three views of Major Robert Levine's Spitfire VB of the 4th FS, La Sebala, Tunisia, June 1943.

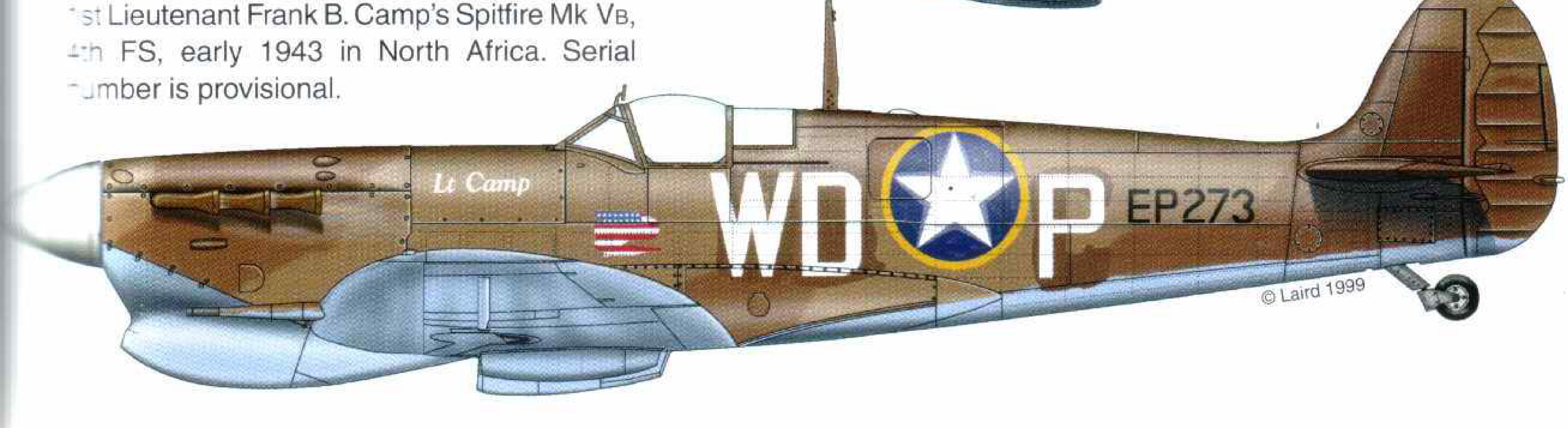
This is a good example of a North African campaign aircraft, with 45" nominal diameter upper wing and 30" nominal diameter fuselage and underwing cocardes. All have yellow borders.


Lt Zendegui
Z
ER148
© Laird 1999

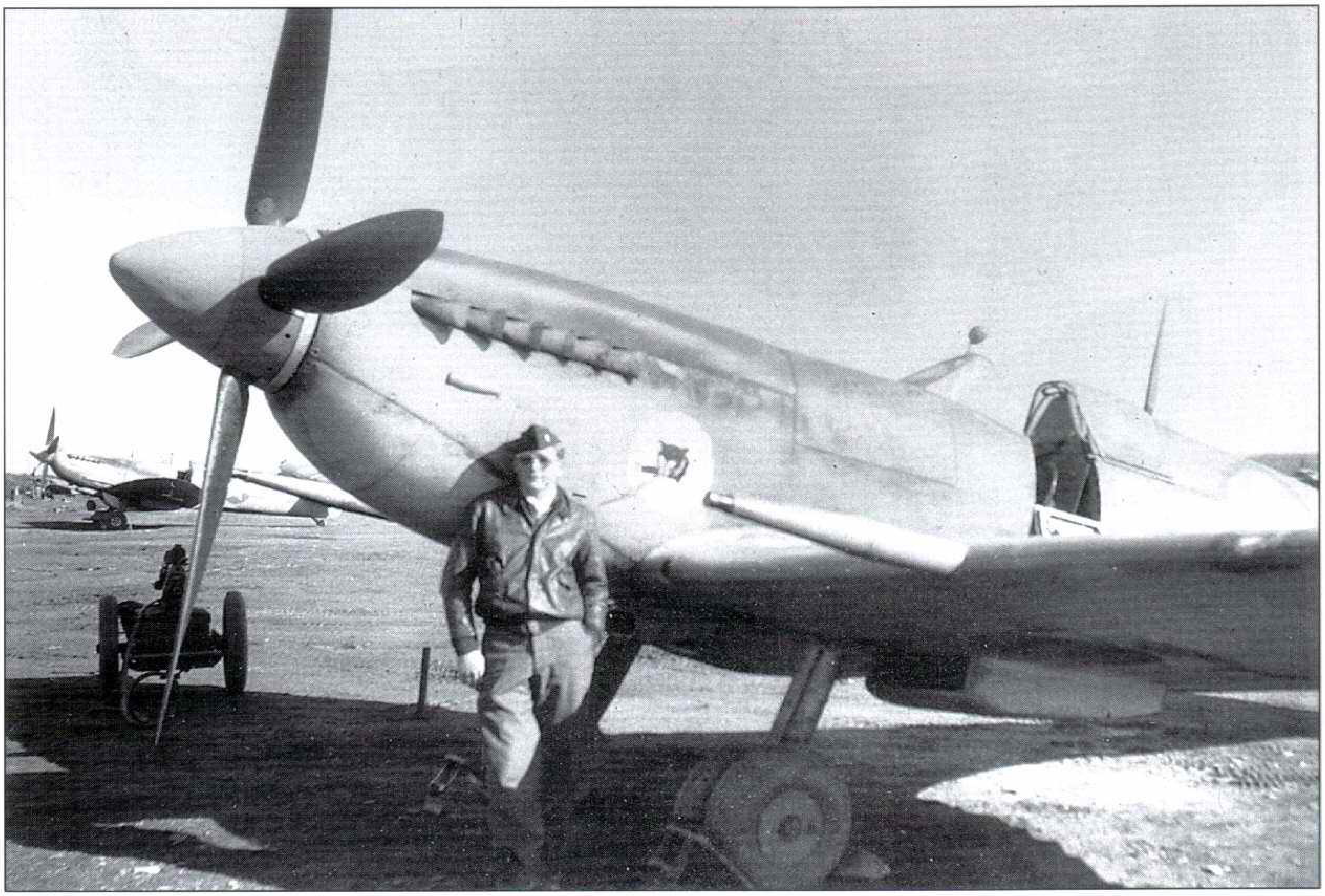
This Desert scheme Spitfire Mk Vc (trop) was flown by Lieutenant Luis Zendegui of the 2nd FS, late 1942 – early 1943, in North Africa.


Doris June II
WD W
EN354
© Laird 2000
© Laird 2000
W WD
EN354
© Laird 2000

Three views of 1st Lieutenant Leonard V. Helton's Spitfire Mk IX, 'Doris June II', of the 4th FS, La Sebala, Tunisia, June 1943. This Desert camouflaged aircraft shows clear evidence of previous, larger code letters and British national insignia.

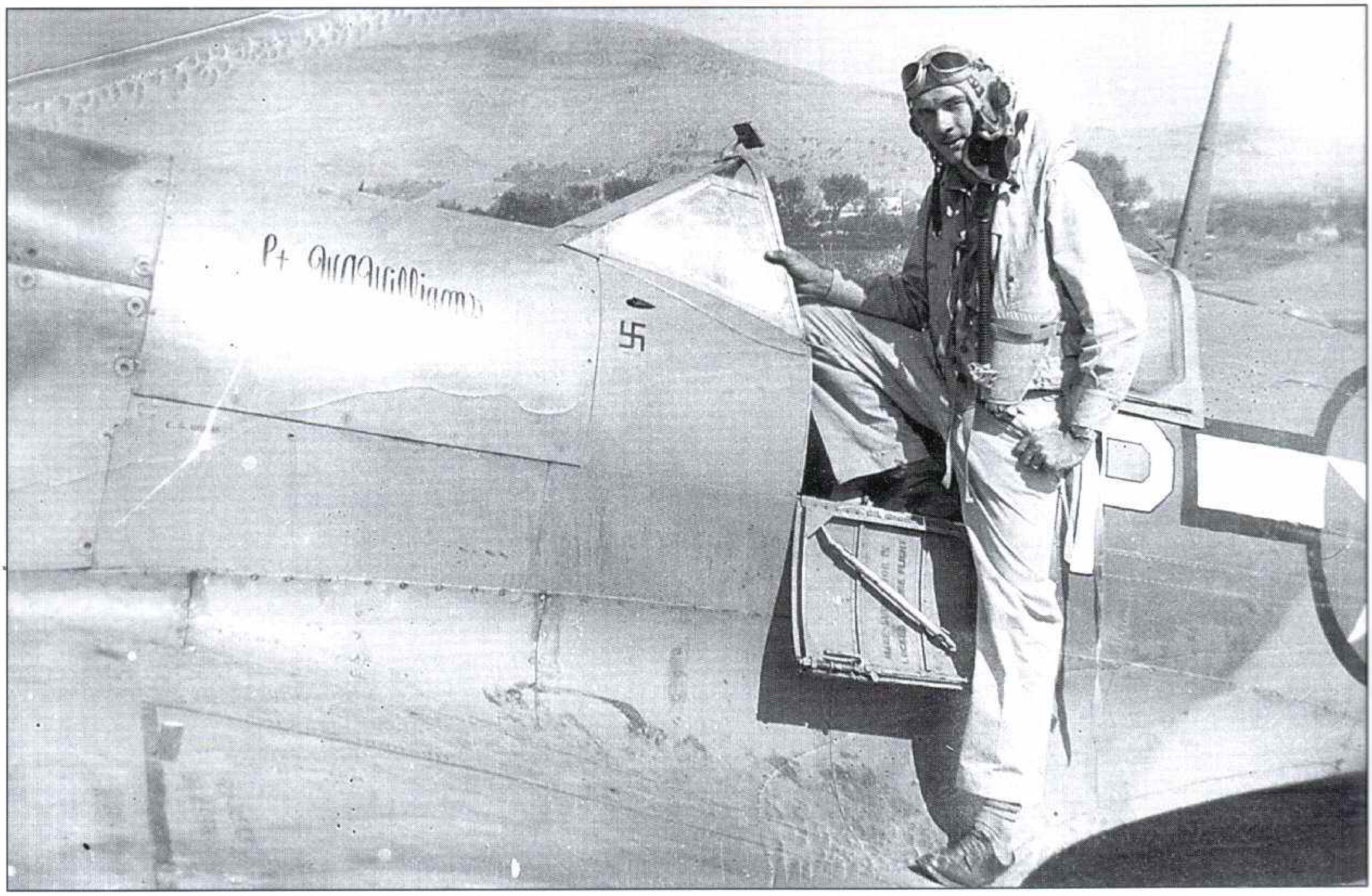

Lt Camp
WD P
EP273
© Laird 1999

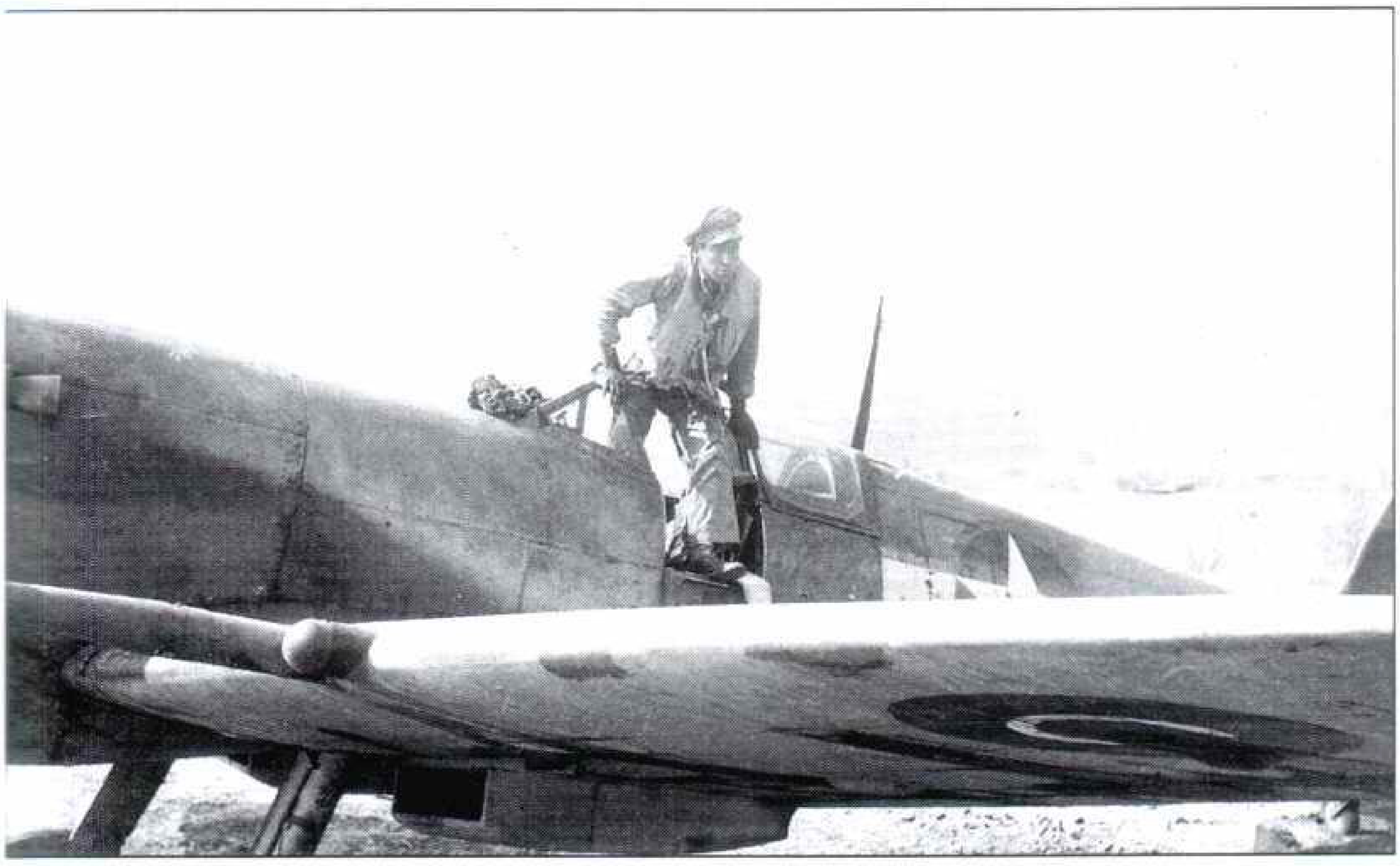
1st Lieutenant Frank B. Camp's Spitfire Mk VB, 4th FS, early 1943 in North Africa. Serial number is provisional.



Captain Stan Rollag of the 5th FS achieved four victories in P-51s. Here he stands next to a Spitfire Mk IX, in Sicily, September 1943. Note the 5th FS 'Spittin Kitten' Squadron badge. (via P Ludwig)

Lieutenant Warren Williams of the 2nd FS at Palermo, August 1943, poses with his Spitfire. Note the thin black outline to the Squadron code letters 'QP' and single victory marking. (via P Ludwig)



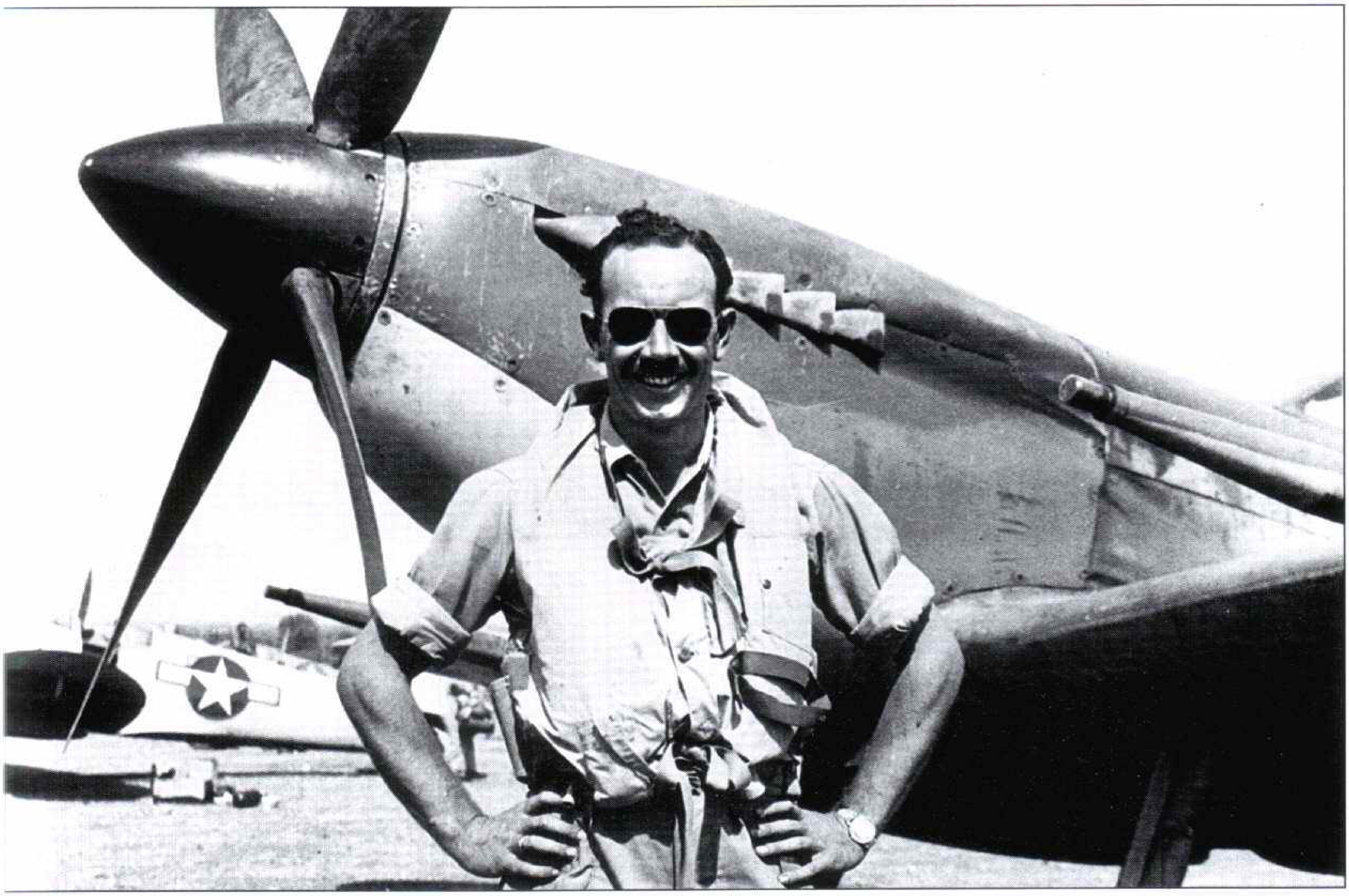


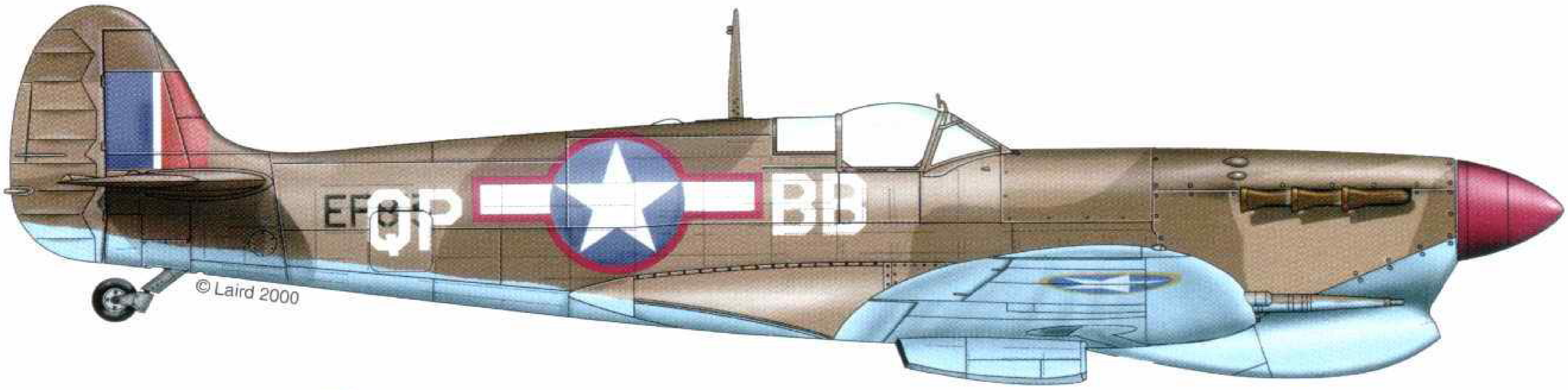
Sometimes Spitfires operated by the USAAF retained some RAF markings. Here, 2nd Lieutenant Mike Encinias of the 2nd FS, climbs out of a Spitfire Mk IX with an RAF roundel under the port wing, Palermo, August 1943. (Via P Ludwig)

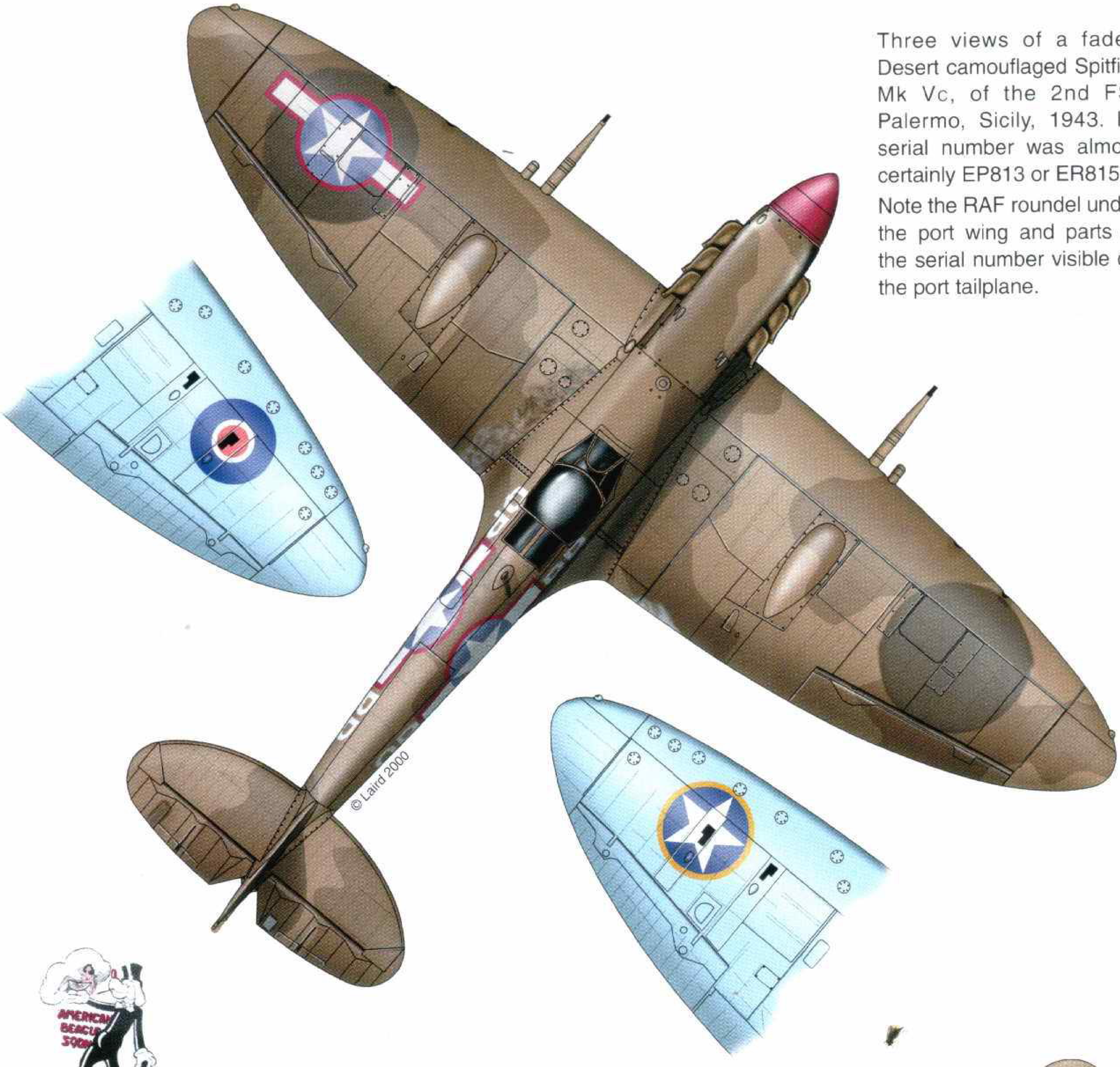
At the end of February, Lt. Colonel Levine replaced McNickle as 52nd FG commander. In mid-March, USAAF Brig. General Laurence Craigie, C.O. of the 63rd Fighter Wing, visited the base telling the Group they would transition to P-51B Mustangs and transfer to the new 15th AF as an escort fighter unit.

The 8th and 9th of April saw several pilots, including Bob Curtis, flown back to Bizerte and Maison Blanche, North Africa to collect new P-51Bs. Curtis liked the heavier and faster Mustang. The group began transition on 17 April at Aghione, Corsica. A search by a very new Mustang pilot for an 'unidentified' boat on 20 April is mentioned as the first Mustang mission; but the first official combat mission was flown on 10 May, escorting B-17s near Nice, France. As of 1 May 1944, the Group was transferred the 15th AF.

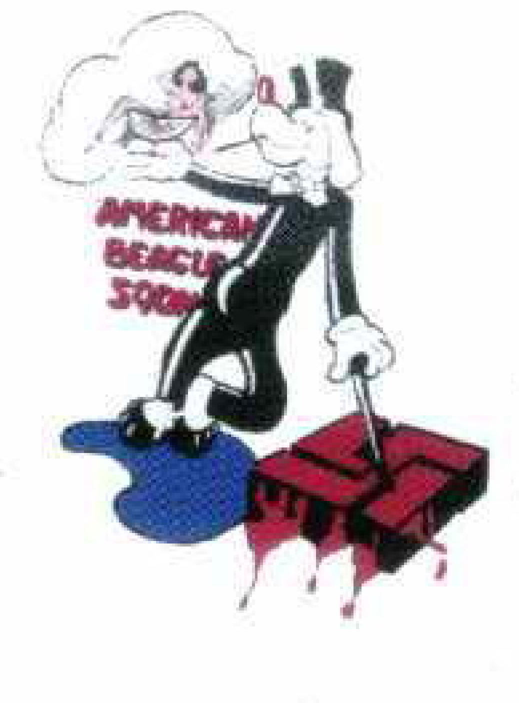
A former Eagle Squadron pilot, 1st Lieutenant Richard 'Dixie' Alexander of the 'Beagle Squadron' was in Sicily at the time of this photo. A light brown or High Altitude scheme Mk IX is in the background. (Haskins)



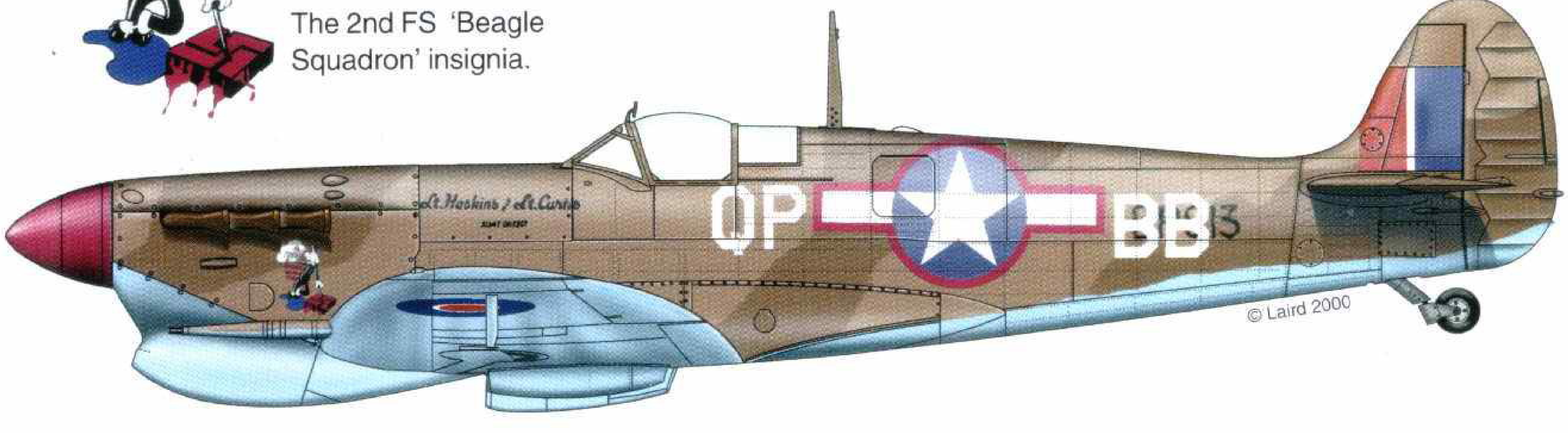

EF
QP
BB
© Laird 2000



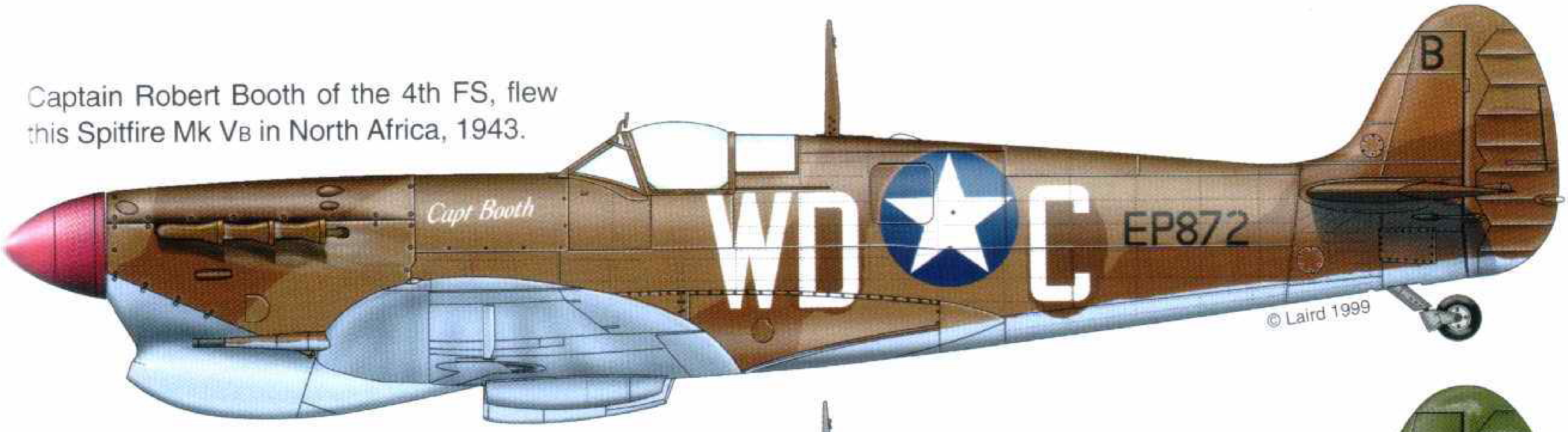
Three views of a faded Desert camouflaged Spitfire Mk Vc, of the 2nd FS, Palermo, Sicily, 1943. Its serial number was almost certainly EP813 or ER815. Note the RAF roundel under the port wing and parts of the serial number visible on the port tailplane.

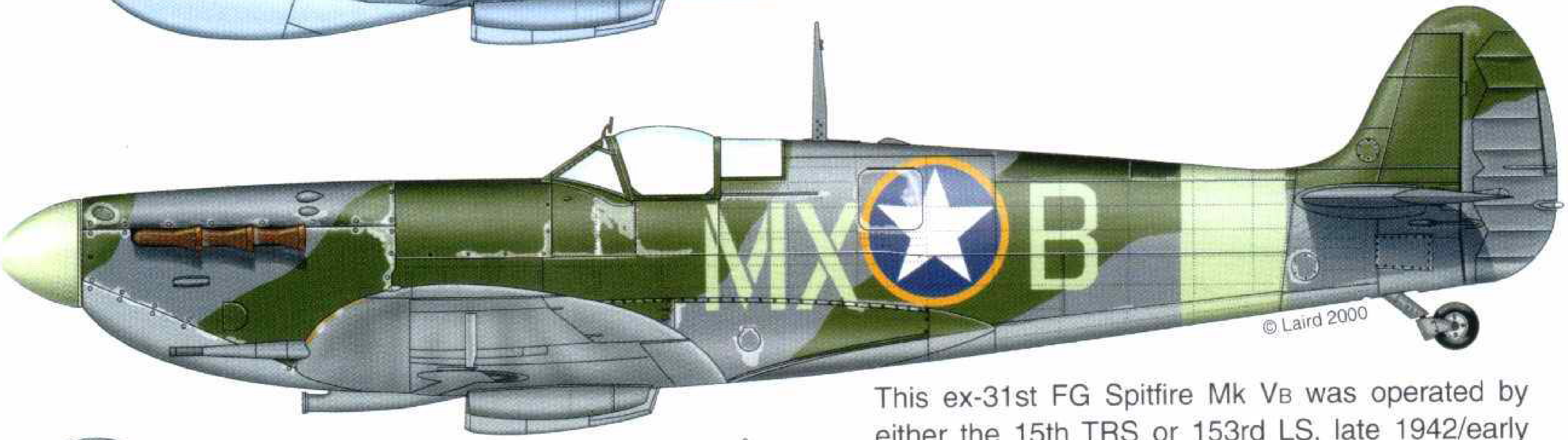

AMERICAN
BEAGLE
SQDN

The 2nd FS 'Beagle Squadron' insignia.

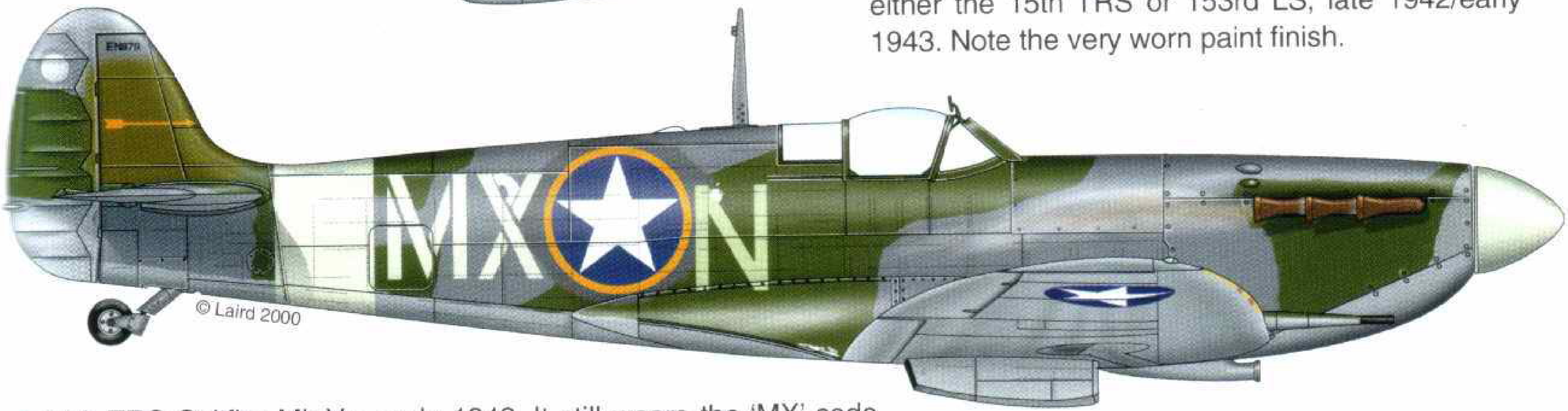

Lt. Hoskins / Lt. Curtis
QP
BB
3
© Laird 2000

Captain Robert Booth of the 4th FS, flew this Spitfire Mk Vb in North Africa, 1943.



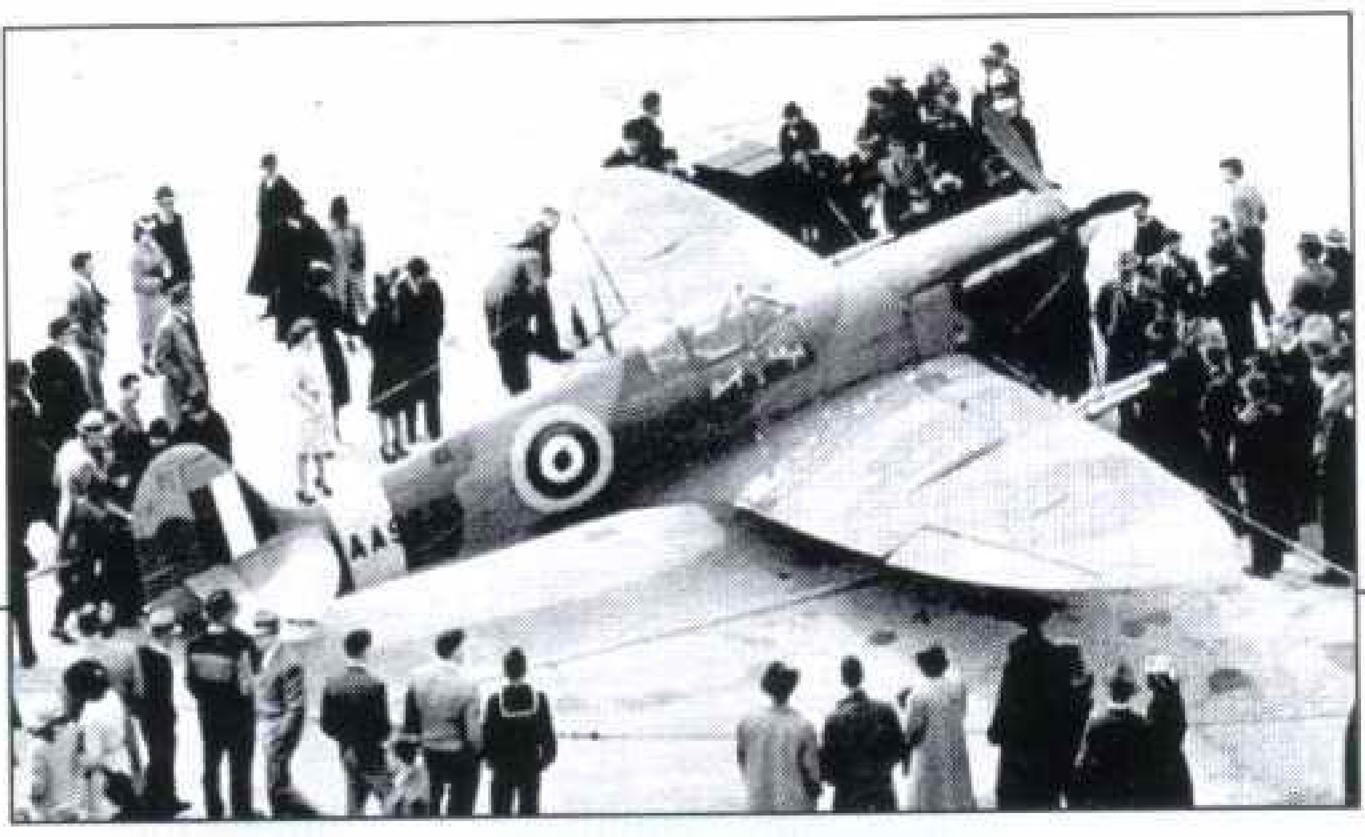


This ex-31st FG Spitfire Mk Vb was operated by either the 15th TRS or 153rd LS, late 1942/early 1943. Note the very worn paint finish.

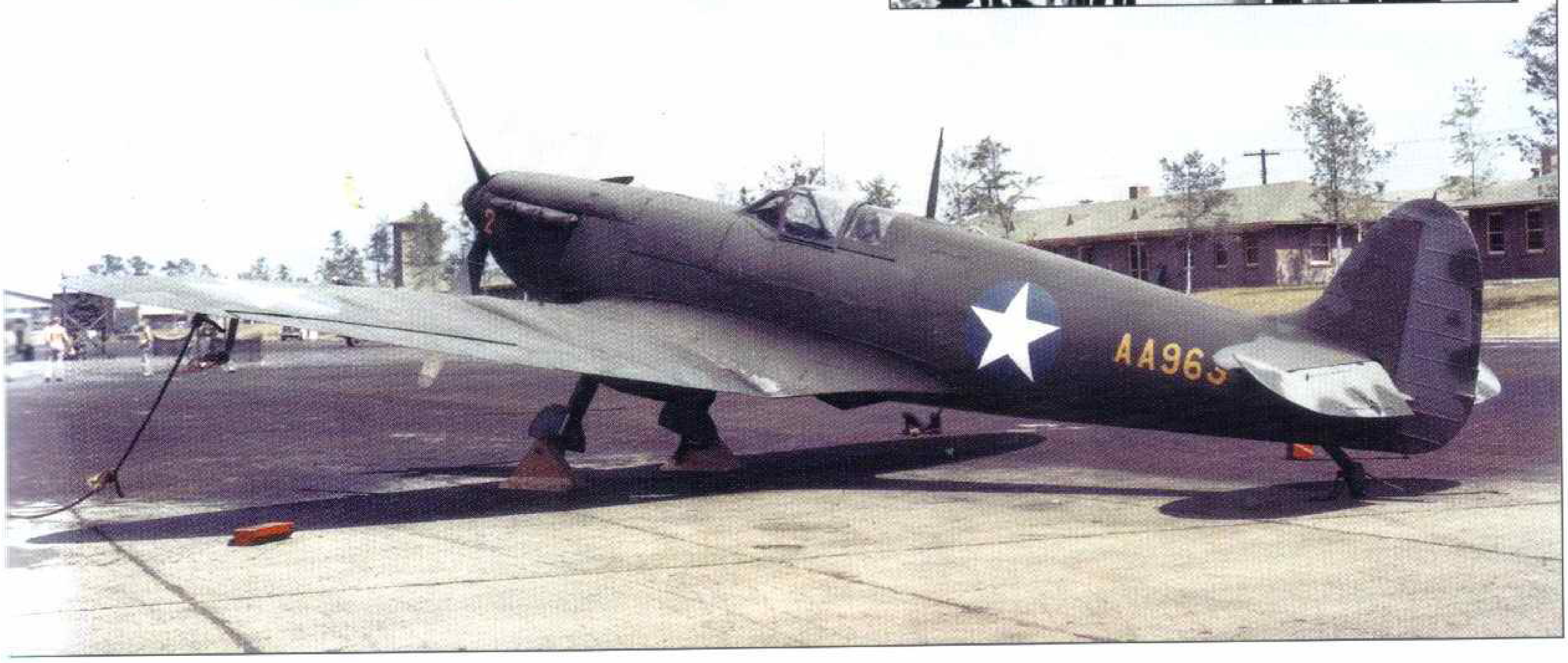


A 15th TRS Spitfire Mk Vb, early 1943. It still wears the 'MX' code letters of the 31st FG, its previous owner. Serial number is provisional.

Spitfire Mk Vc AA963, a presentation machine named 'Borough of Southgate', was shipped to the USA for evaluation. Right, AA963 photographed at Chicago Municipal Airport in early Spring 1942 and later below, without main wheels at Wright Field, Dayton, Ohio, by which time it had been repainted in a USAAF *Olive Drab* and *Neutral Gray* scheme. Note the blotching on the tail surfaces.



Wojtek Matusiak

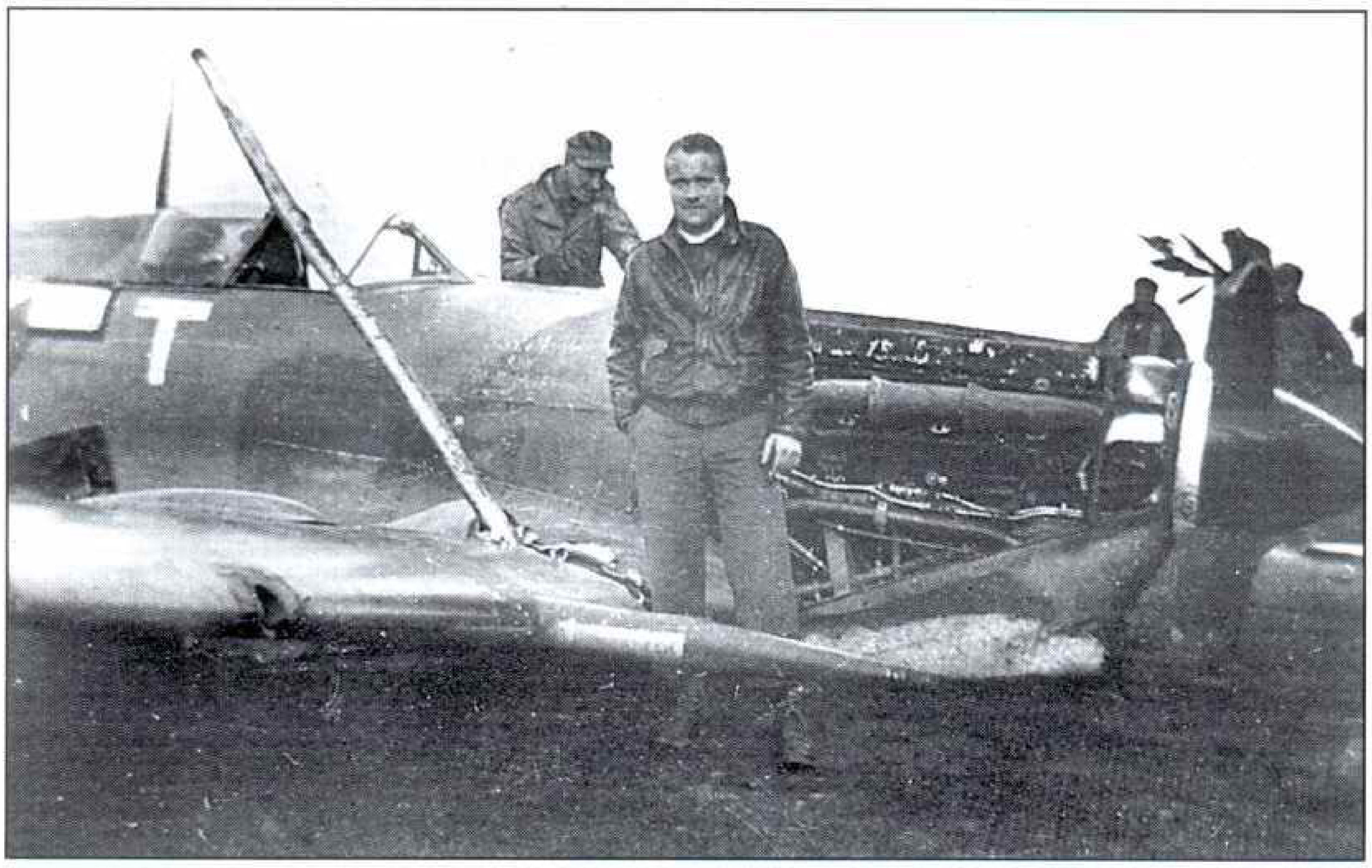


(USAF)

ITALY

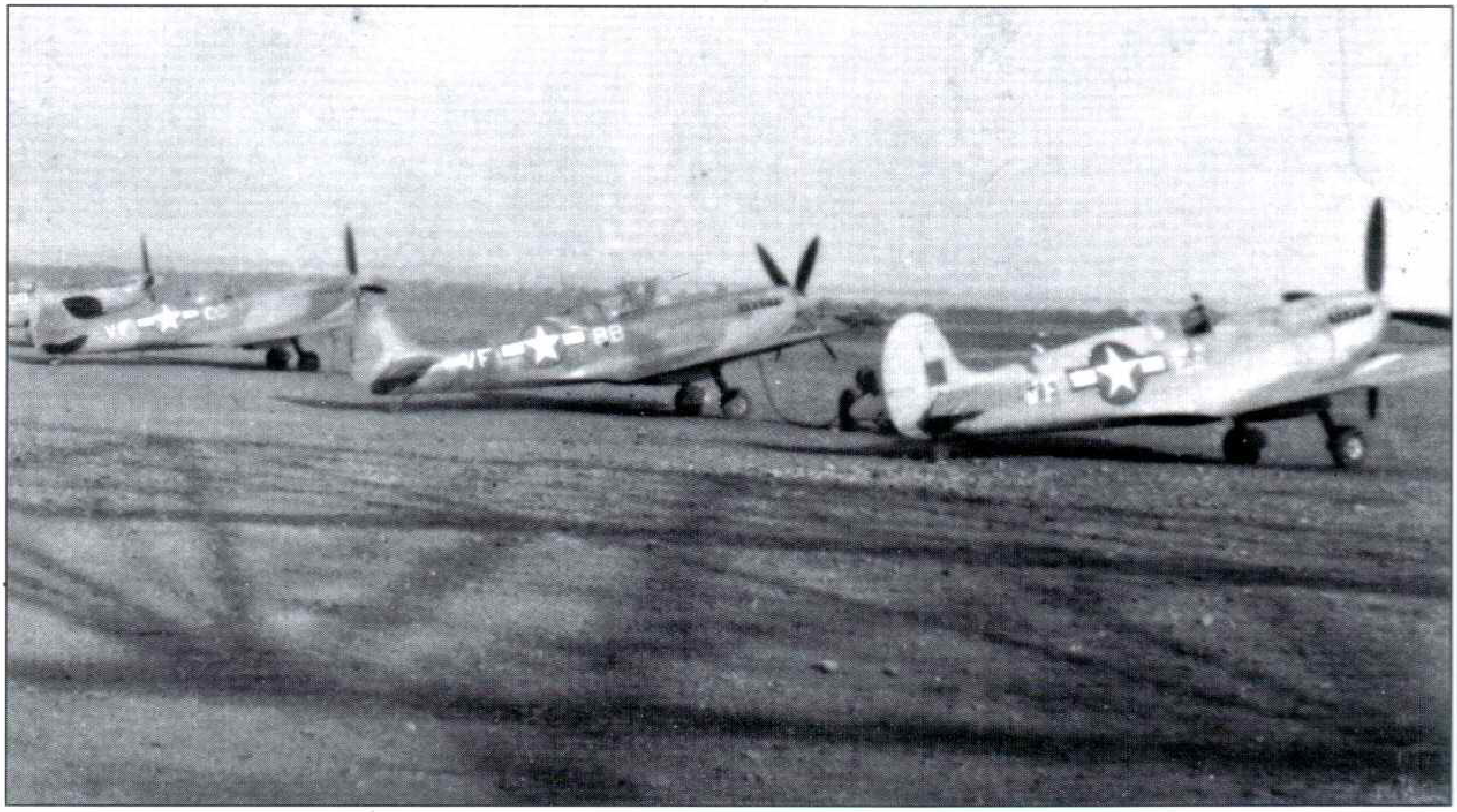
On 13 May 1944, the 52nd FG moved to Madna airstrip in Italy, north of the complex of bases at Foggia, and remained there almost to the end of the war. A final move in April 1945, took the Group further north to Piagiolino.

Flying P-51 Mustangs and operating at long distances to Germany afforded frequent combat opportunities. In two months - May and June 1944 - the Group shot down more enemy aircraft than it had in flying Spitfires for twenty months. It set a record in June 1944 for the MTO of 102 kills and earned two Unit Citations for extremely successful escort missions on 9 June and 31 August, 1944. By the end of the war the 52nd Fighter Group's total aerial victories for Mustang operations was 257. In Spitfires the total was 164·3.

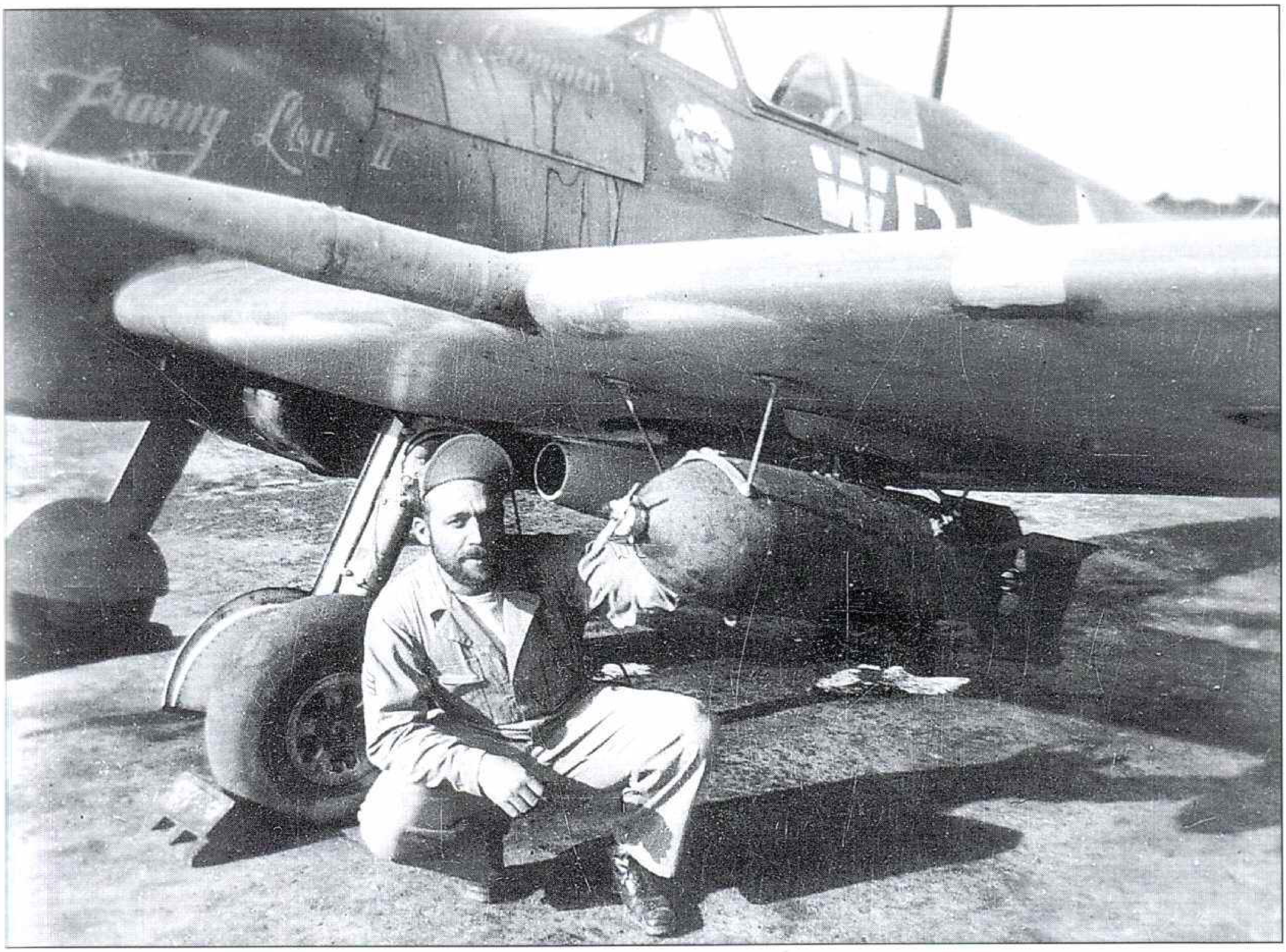


Captain Lee Trowbridge of the 4th FS flew a low-level reconnaissance mission over southern France on 8 December 1943. While attacking a locomotive on the way home, he flew so low he hit a flagpole and a fifteen foot length of pole embedded itself in his wing. He successfully belly-landed back at base and the pole was kept as a Mess decoration. Note the lit cigarette in Trowbridge's left hand.

Later as a Major, he was appointed C.O. of the 4th FS, in early 1944. (R Klug)

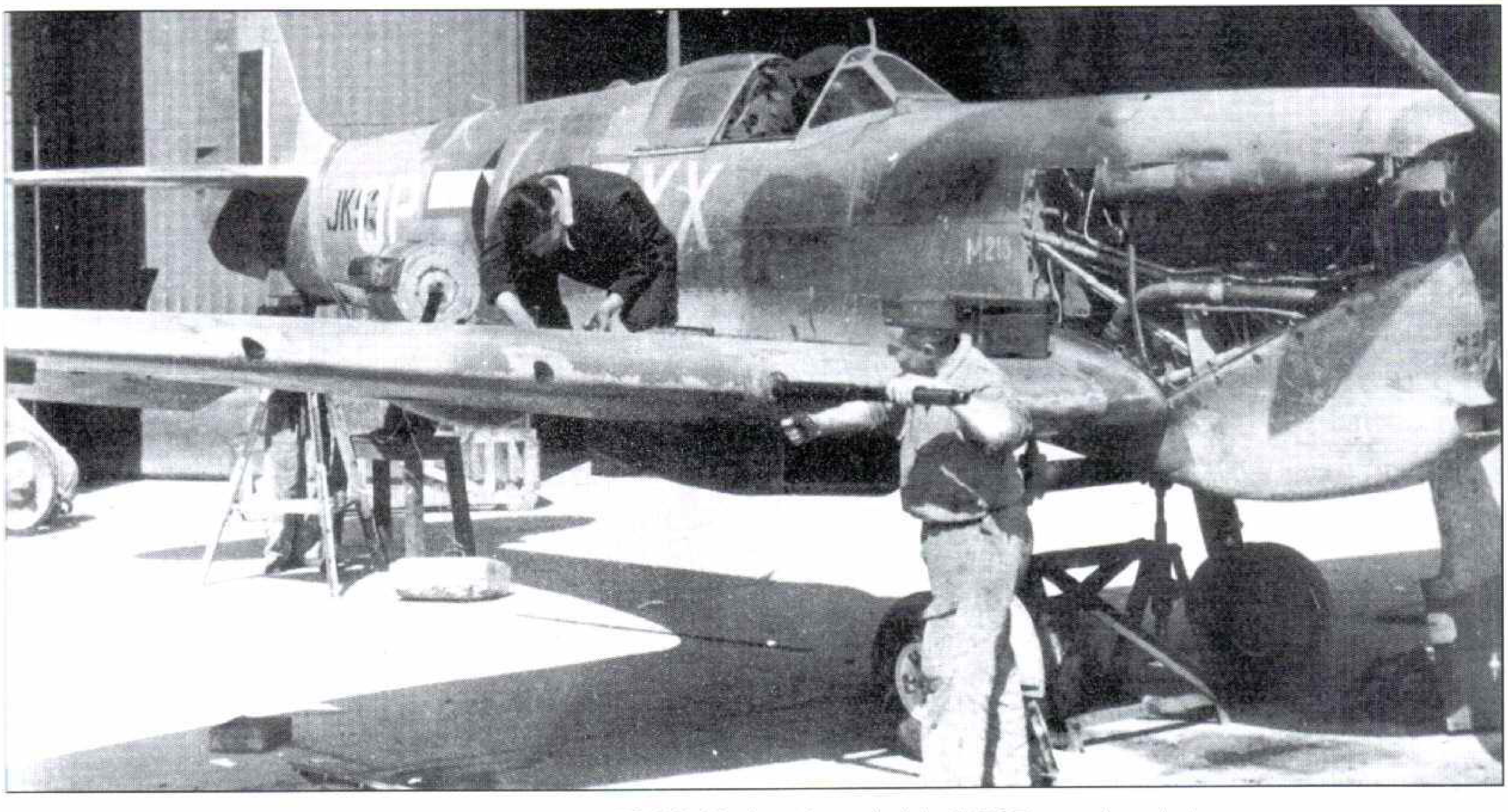


A line-up of 5th FS Spitfires, all Mk IXs. VF-EE is an ex RAF Mk IX which retains its RAF High Altitude scheme of *Medium Sea Grey* uppersurfaces and *PRU Blue* undersurfaces. Note the 12" square red and blue RAF fin-flash. (Hahn)



Sergeant Bob Klug, Crew Chief for Spitfire Mk Vc 'Franny Lou II', showing a 250 pound bomb, at Calvi, Corsica, January 1944. 'Franny Lou II', was flown by 1st Lieutenant Guy S. Cummins.

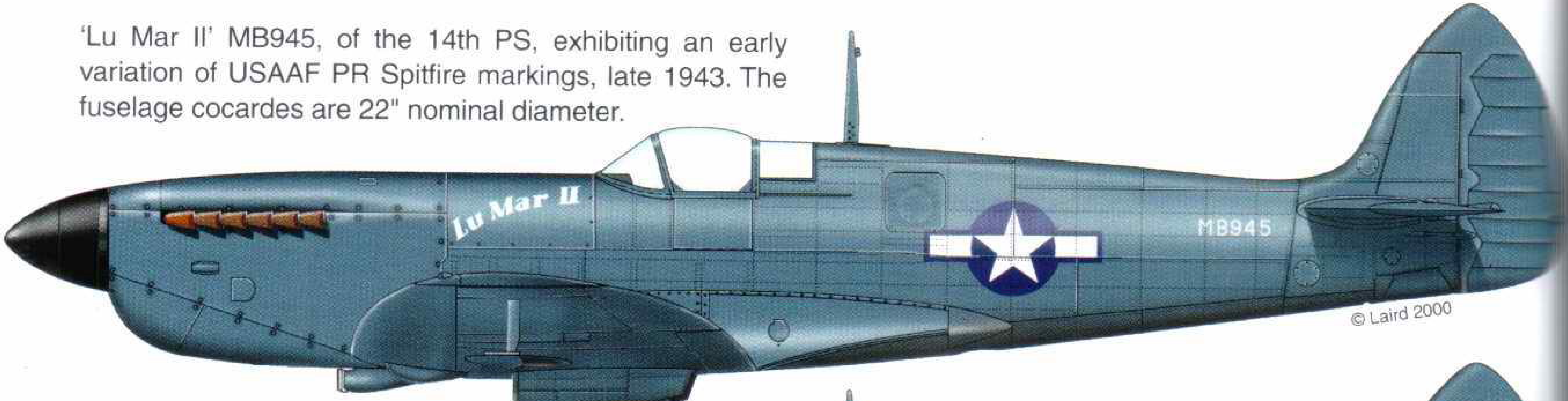
Of note are the letters 'WD' painted with a stencil, the pilots name forward of the cockpit and the 'skull' squadron insignia. A 30 gallon drop tank is in place under the fuselage. (R Klug)

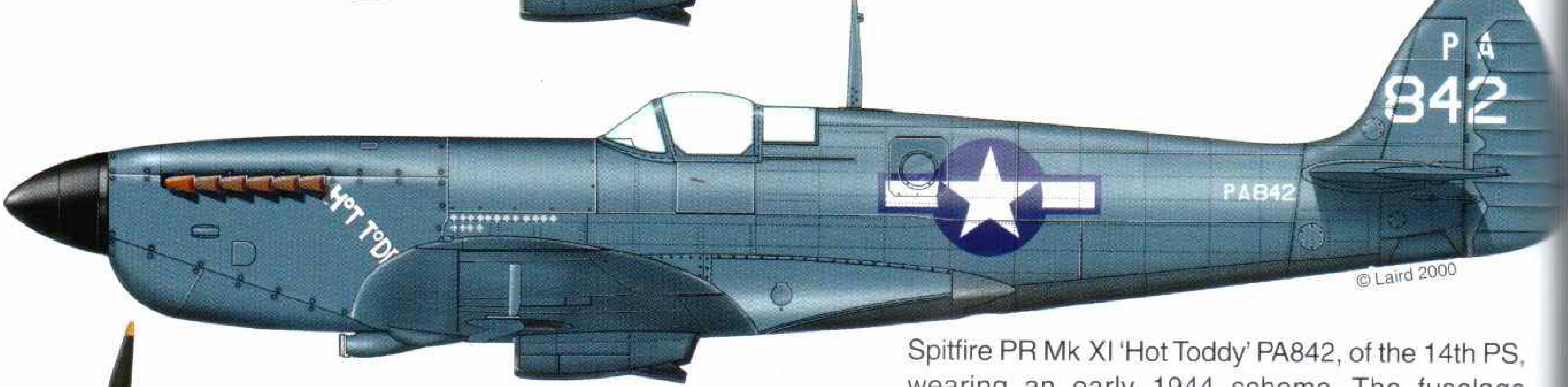


What becomes of broken Spitfires? This ex 2nd FS Mk Vc (trop), probably JK537, was handed over to the French Armée de l'Air in about May 1944.

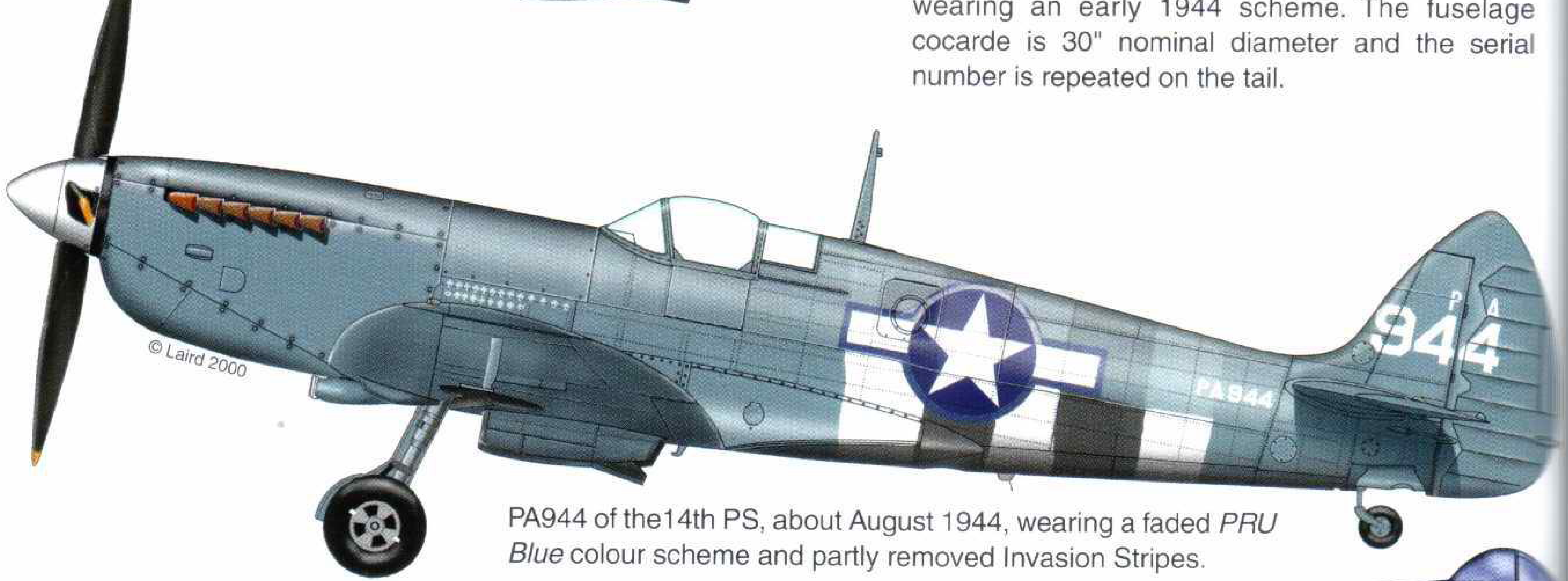
Note the extensive repair work, that appears to include an RAF marked tail section. (via B Anderson)

'Lu Mar II' MB945, of the 14th PS, exhibiting an early variation of USAAF PR Spitfire markings, late 1943. The fuselage cocardes are 22" nominal diameter.

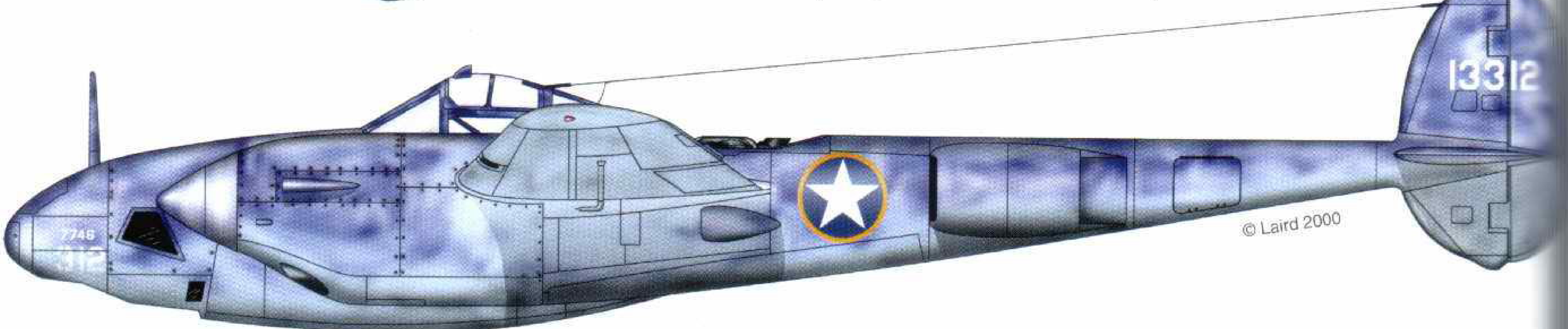

Lu Mar II
MB945
© Laird 2000


P A
842
PA842
Hot Tod
© Laird 2000

Spitfire PR Mk XI 'Hot Toddy' PA842, of the 14th PS, wearing an early 1944 scheme. The fuselage cocarde is 30" nominal diameter and the serial number is repeated on the tail.

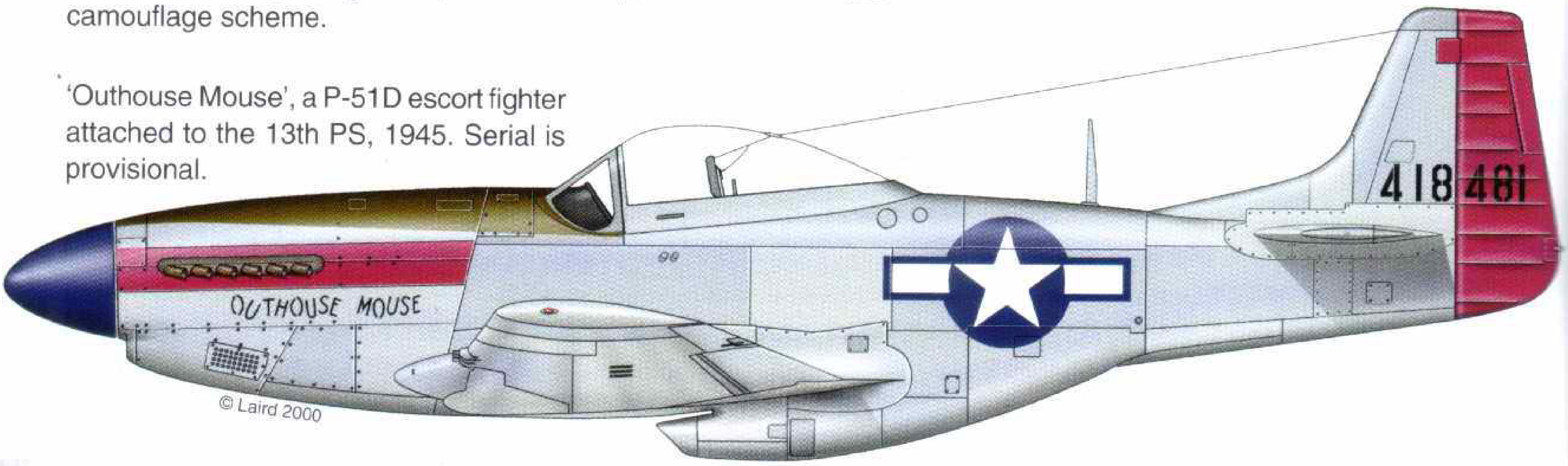

P A
944
PA944
© Laird 2000

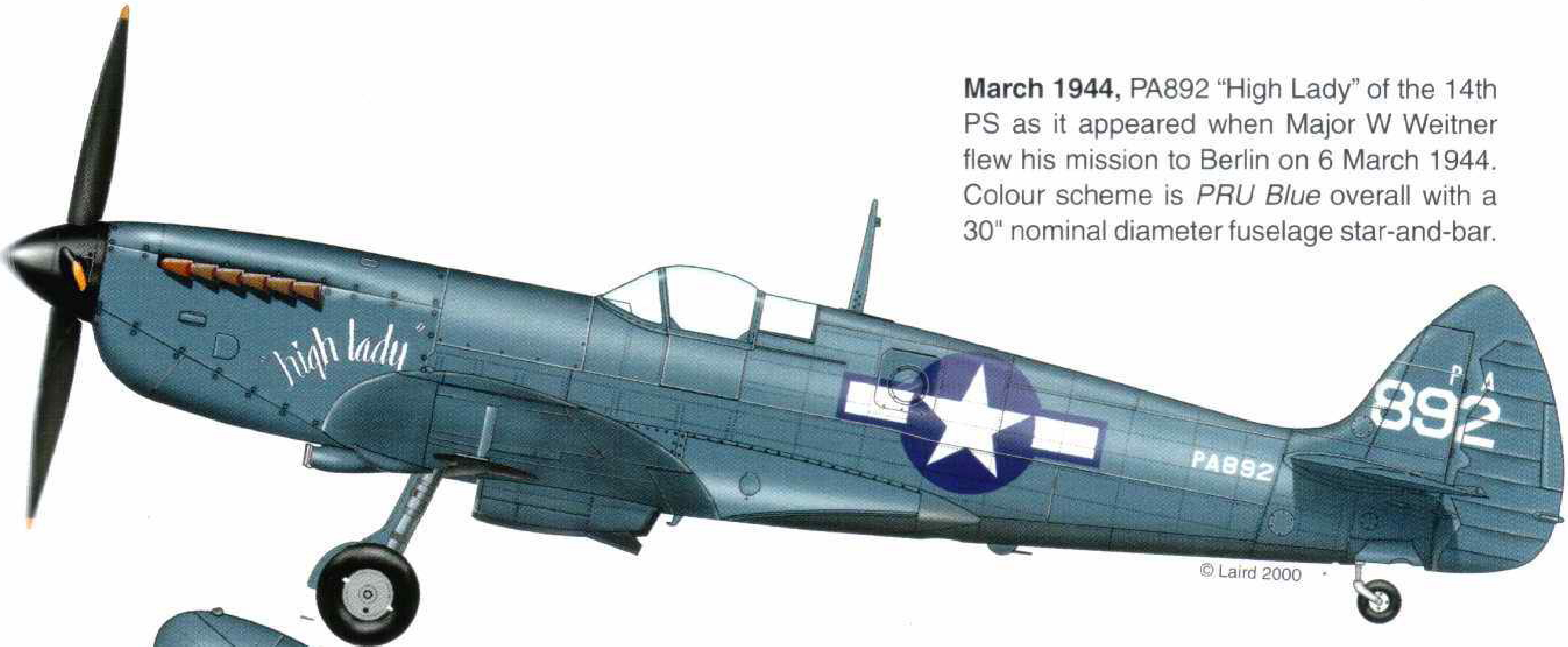
PA944 of the14th PS, about August 1944, wearing a faded *PRU Blue* colour scheme and partly removed Invasion Stripes.


13312
7746
312
© Laird 2000

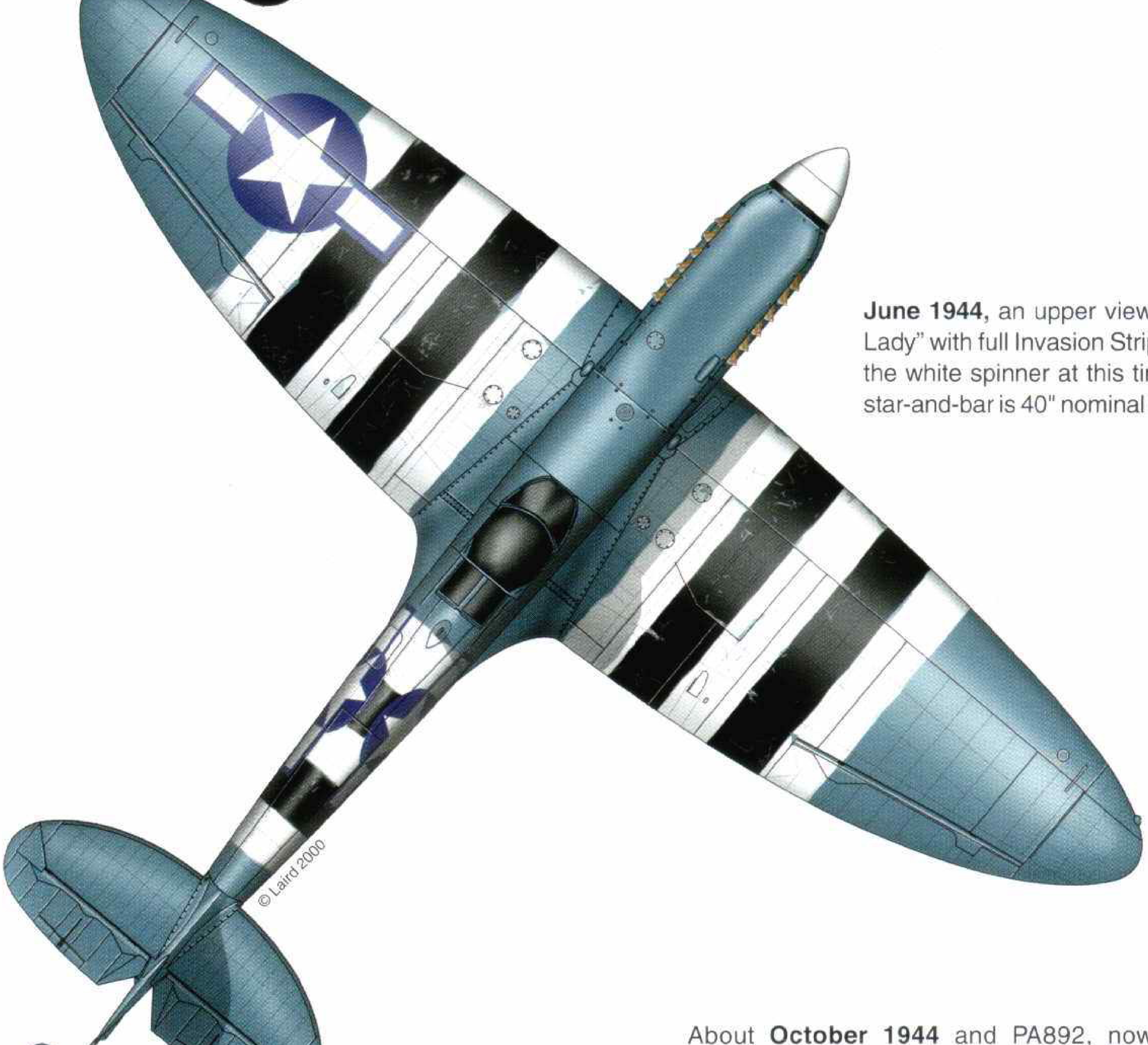
Lockheed F-5 Lightning, 7746, of the 7th PG, in the USAAF 'Haze' camouflage scheme.

'Outhouse Mouse', a P-51D escort fighter attached to the 13th PS, 1945. Serial is provisional.


418481
OUTHOUSE MOUSE
© Laird 2000

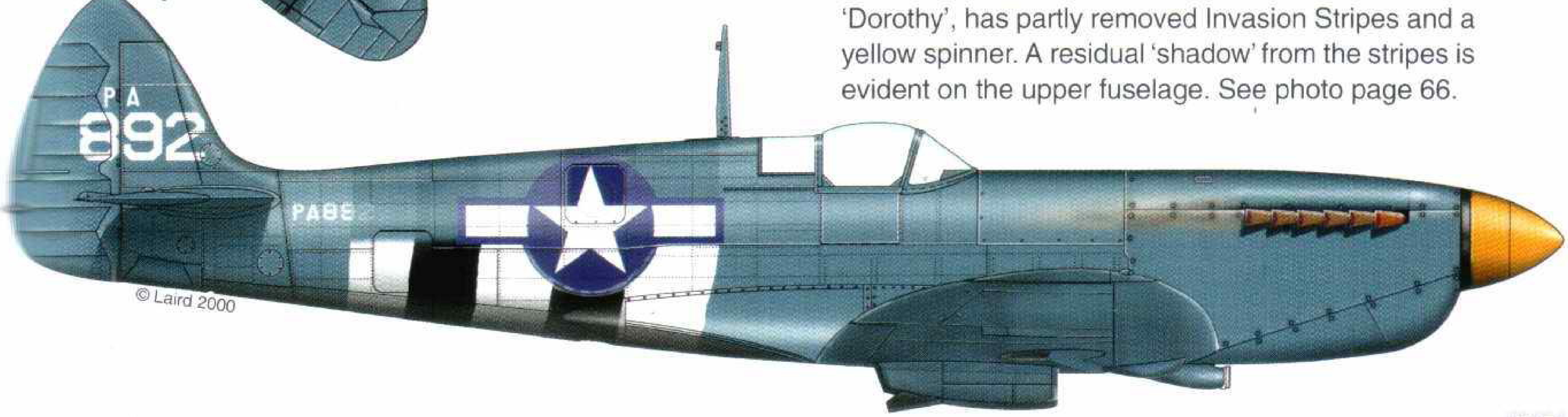

high lady
P A
892
PA892
© Laird 2000

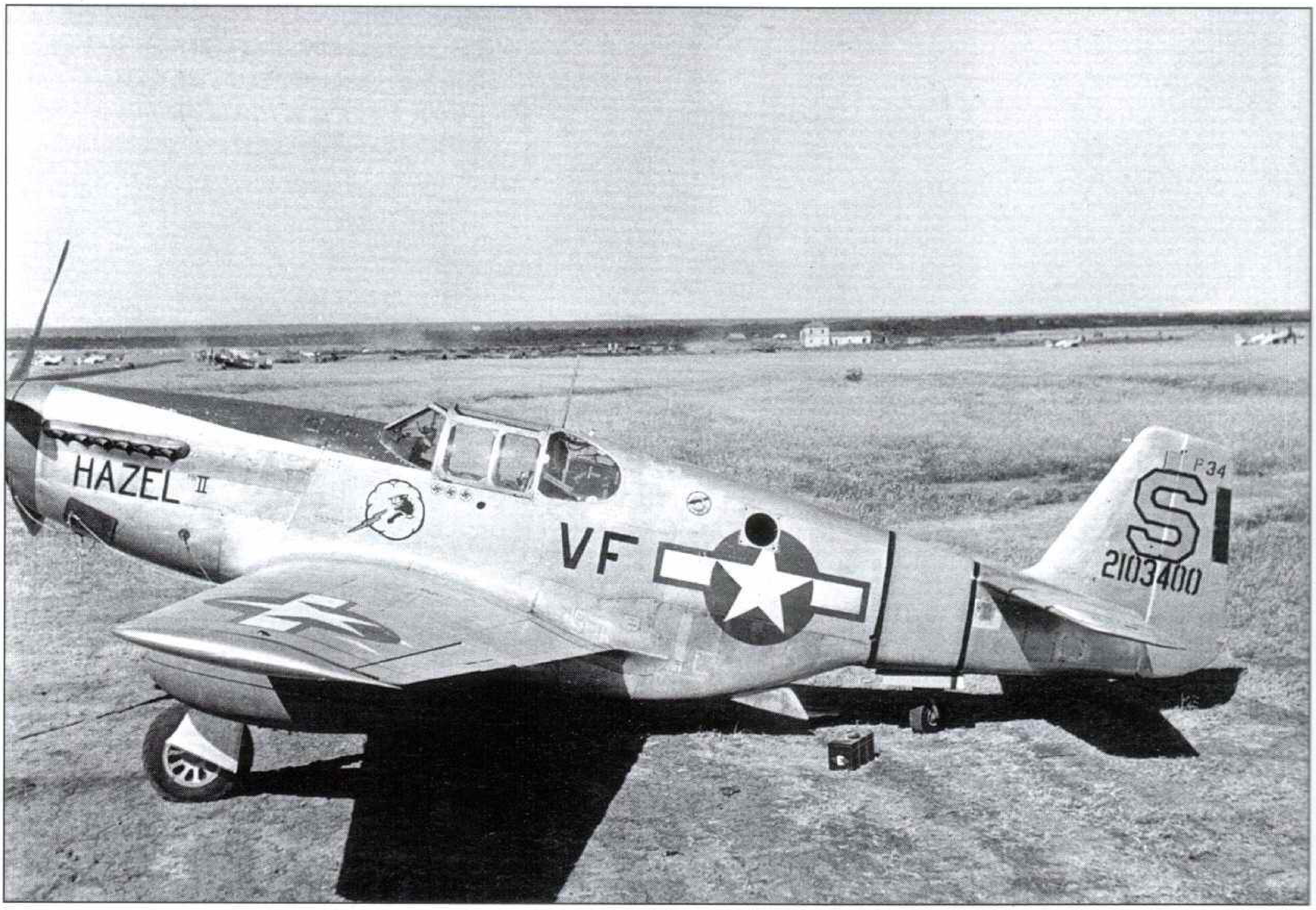
March 1944, PA892 "High Lady" of the 14th PS as it appeared when Major W Weitner flew his mission to Berlin on 6 March 1944. Colour scheme is *PRU Blue* overall with a 30" nominal diameter fuselage star-and-bar.



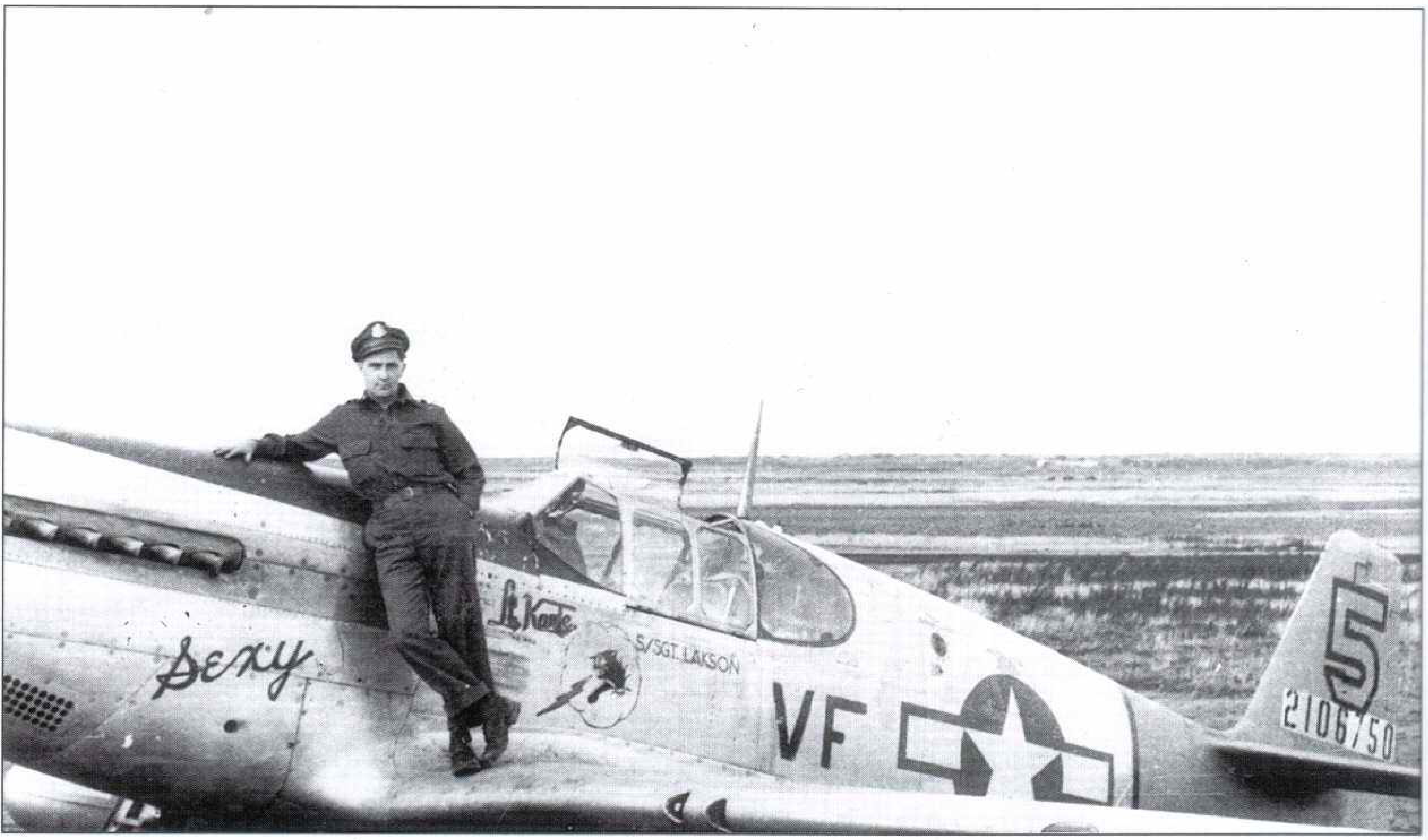
June 1944, an upper view of "High Lady" with full Invasion Stripes. Note the white spinner at this time. Wing star-and-bar is 40" nominal diameter.

About **October 1944** and PA892, now named 'Dorothy', has partly removed Invasion Stripes and a yellow spinner. A residual 'shadow' from the stripes is evident on the upper fuselage. See photo page 66.


P A
892
PA89
© Laird 2000

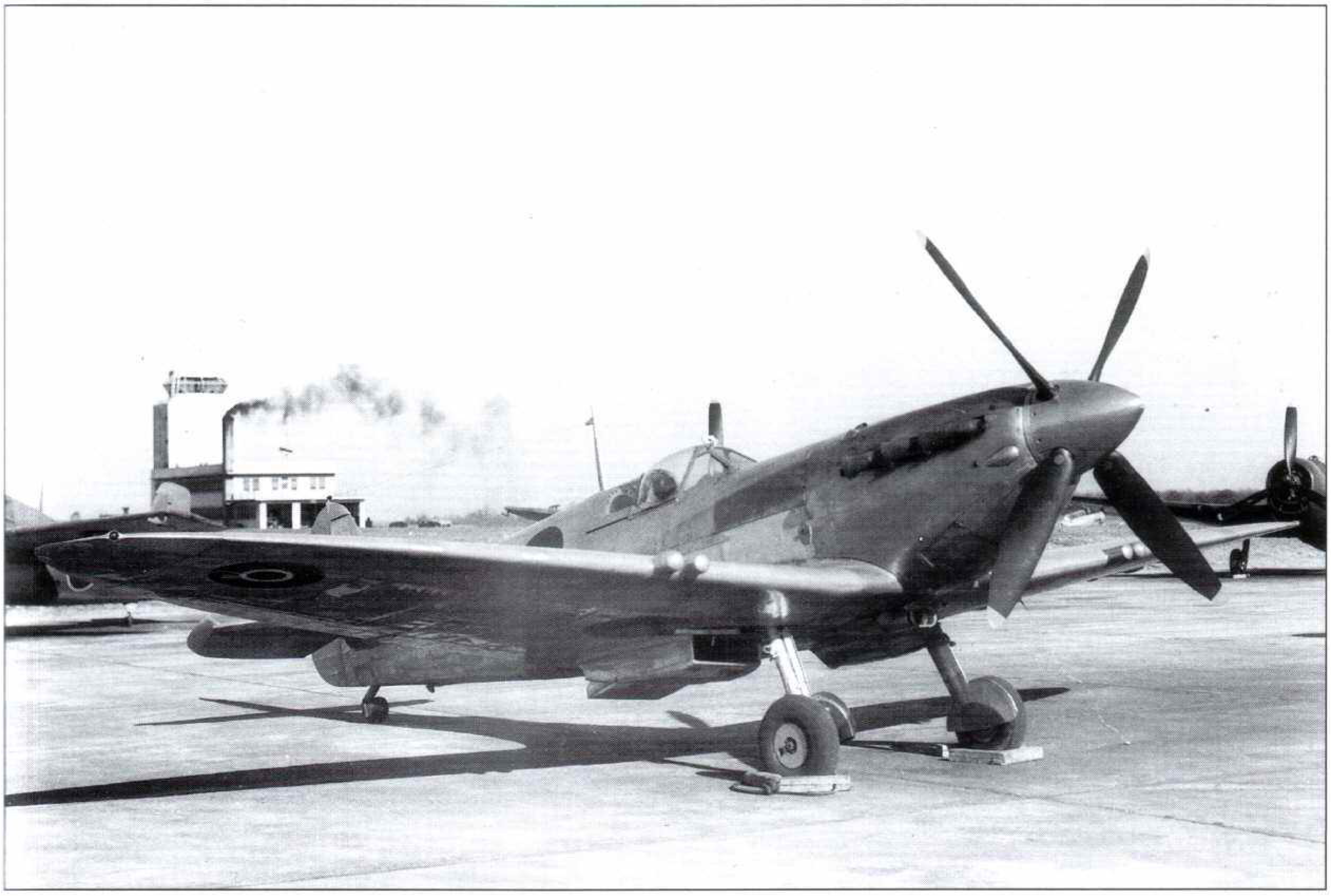

HAZEL II
VF
P34
S
2103400

'Hazel II' was a P-51C-50NT in bare metal finish flown by 2nd Lieutenant James H. Johnson of the 5th FS. The Squadron's 'Spittin Kitten' insignia is painted under the windscreen, together with three victory markings. 75-gallon drop tanks are in place. (Via P Ludwig)

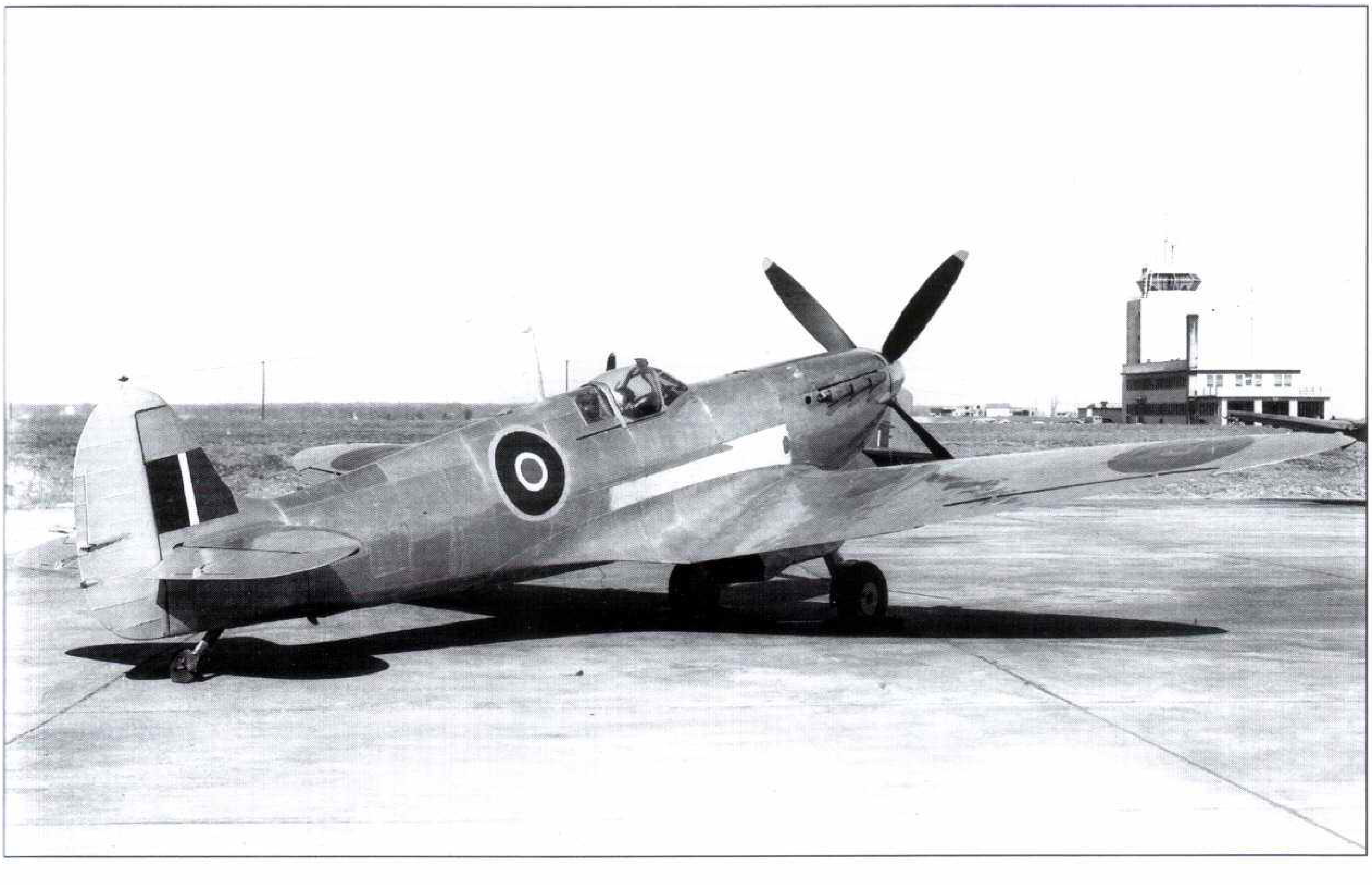

Sexy
Lt Karle
S/SGT. LAKSON
VF
5
2106750

P-51 'Sexy' had a number, rather than a letter, on the tail, which was unusual. It belonged to 2nd Lieutenant John G. Karle of the 5th FS and Staff Sergeant Lakson was the Crew Chief. The aircraft has a black outlined yellow tail section and the 'Spittin Kitten' insignia is seen clearly. (Fulks)

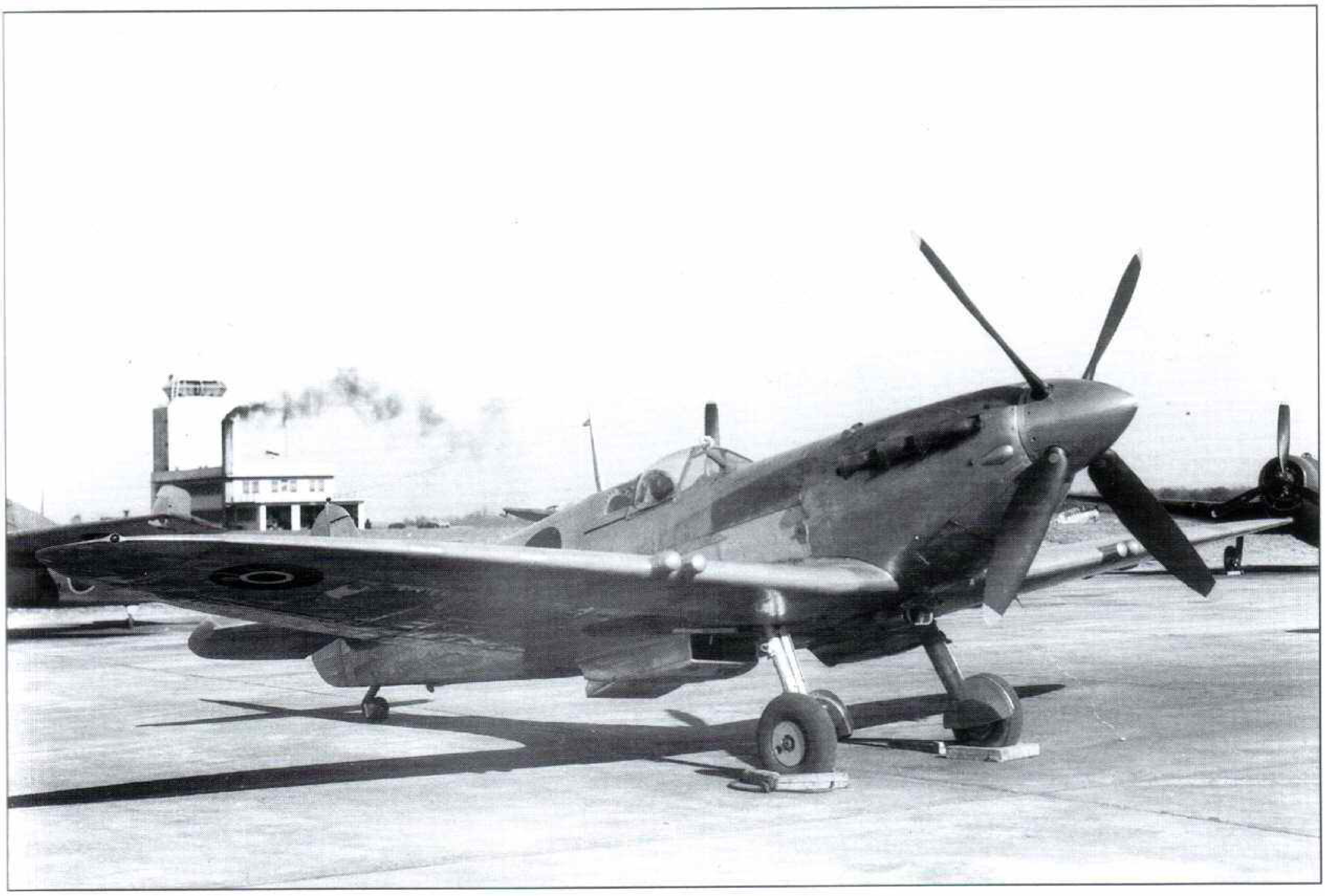
US NAVY EVALUATION SEAFIRE



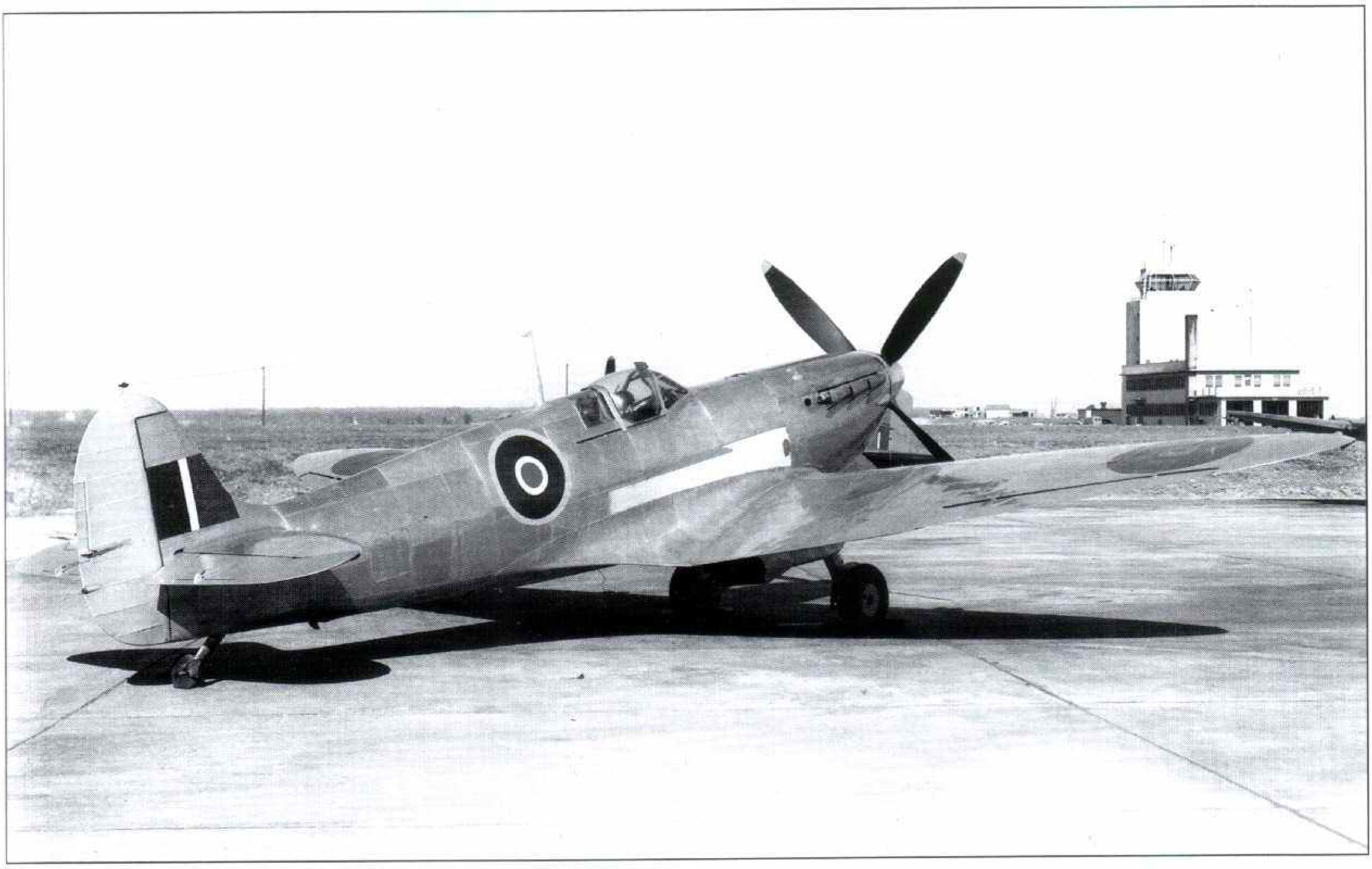
This Seafire LF IIc serial MB190 was used by the US Navy at Patuxent River Naval Air Test Station, for comparison trials with the then-new Grumman F8F Bearcat. The Bearcat far outclassed this 1944 Seafire in all facets of operation. MB190 was allowed to deteriorate to a derelict state and was eventually scrapped. (US Navy)



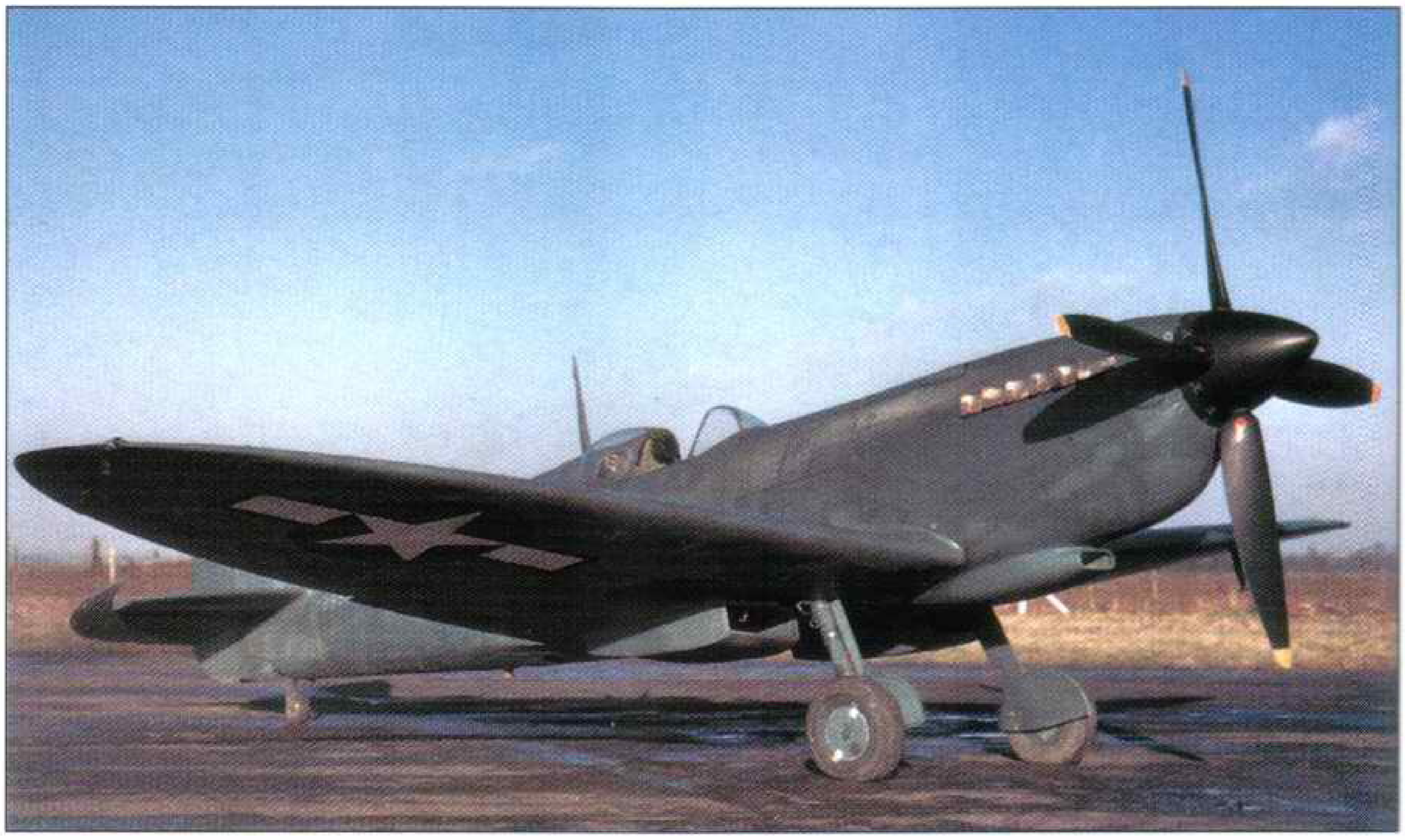
US NAVY EVALUATION SEAFIRE



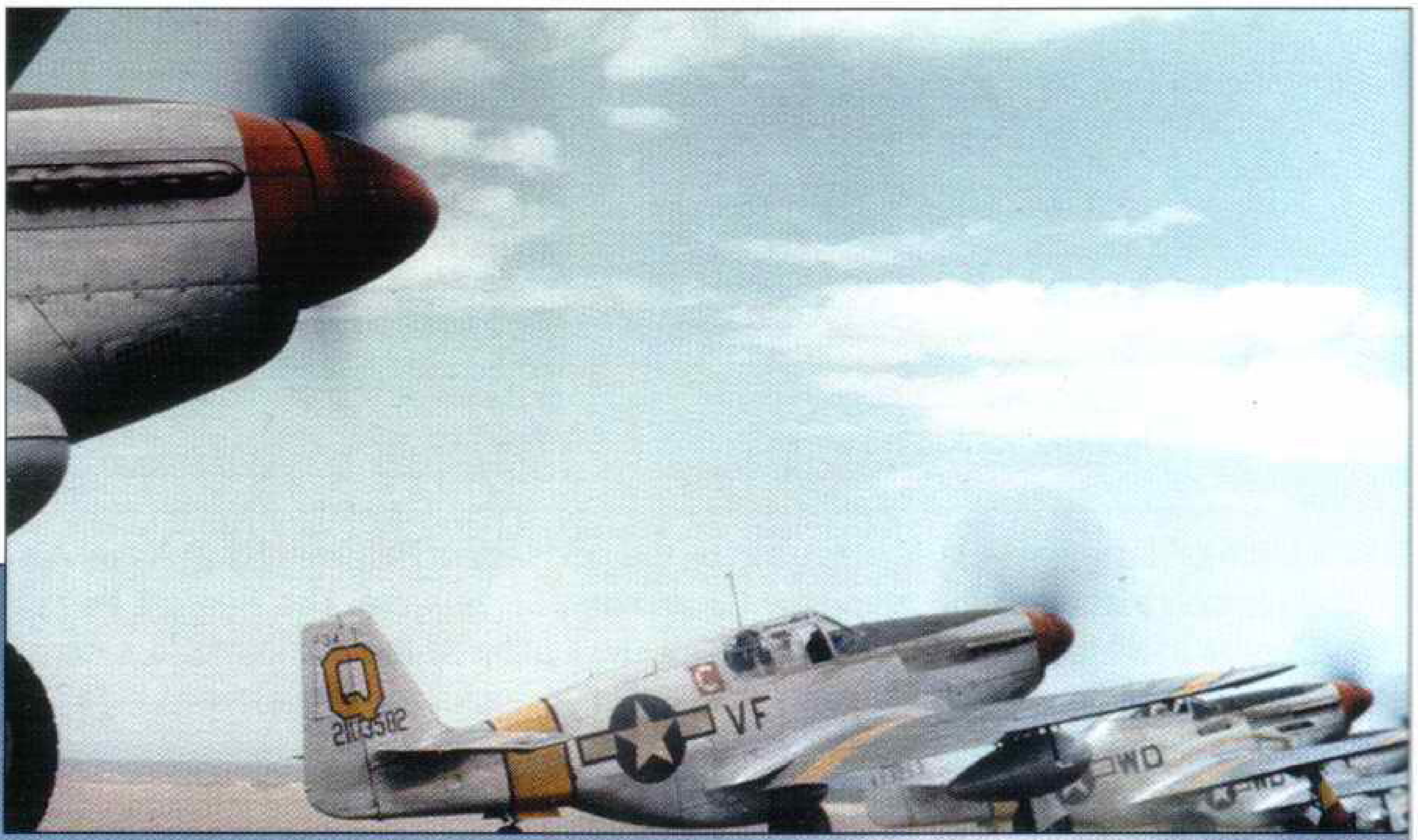
This Seafire LF IIc serial MB190 was used by the US Navy at Patuxent River Naval Air Test Station, for comparison trials with the then-new Grumman F8F Bearcat. The Bearcat far outclassed this 1944 Seafire in all facets of operation. MB190 was allowed to deteriorate to a derelict state and was eventually scrapped. (US Navy)



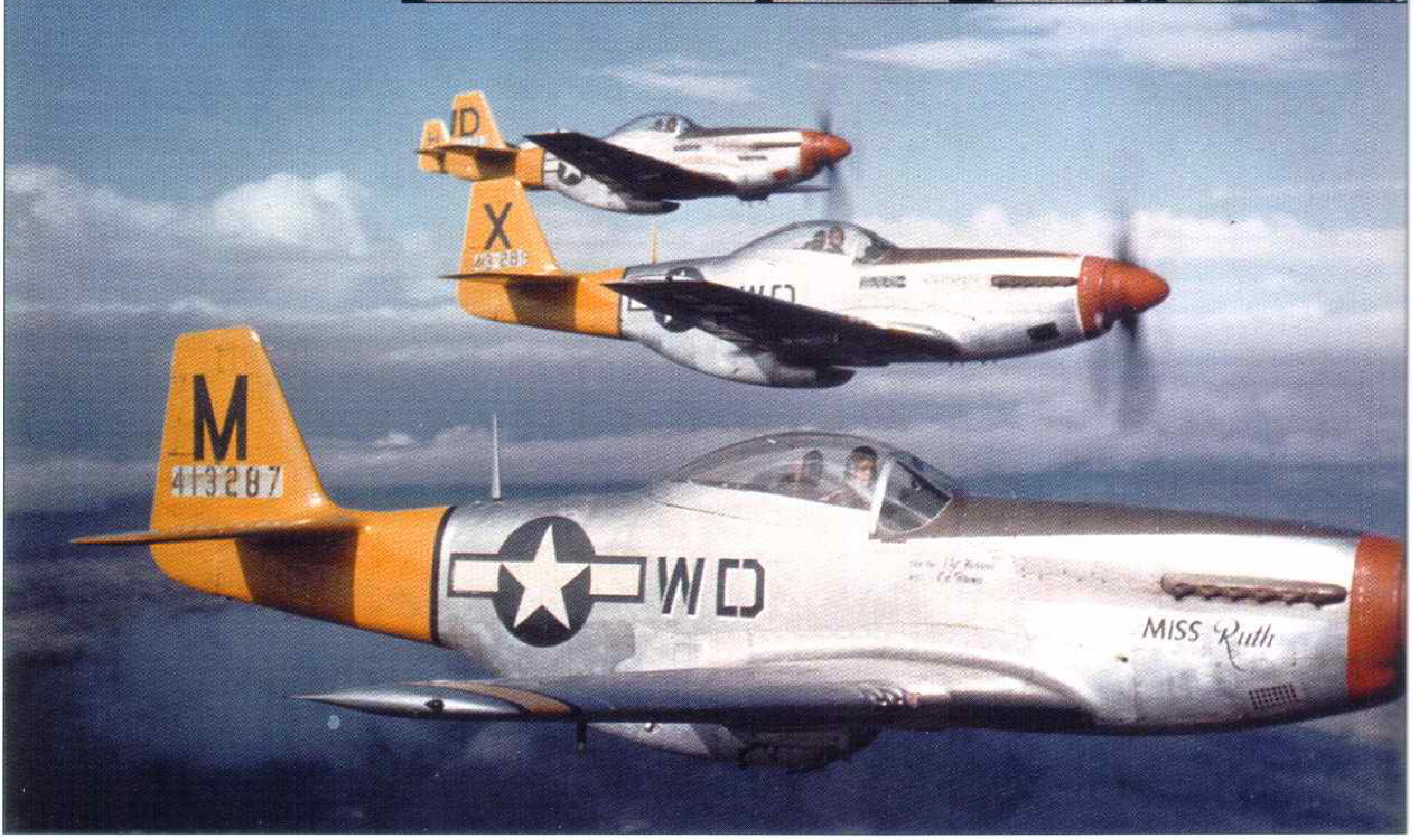
A newly delivered Spitfire PR Mk XI at Mount Farm, England, in 1944. Note the slight green tinge in the *PRU Blue* colour, which extends to the undercarriage legs and inside the doors. (via S Potenski)



The 52nd FG Spitfires were replaced with Mustangs in April 1944. Right, a mixture of 4th and 5th FS P-51B, C & D Mustangs taxi prior to takeoff at an Italian airfield. (USAAF)



Below, four P-51D Mustangs of the 4th FS in formation over Italy, late 1944. (USAAF)



THE 67TH RECONNAISSANCE GROUP

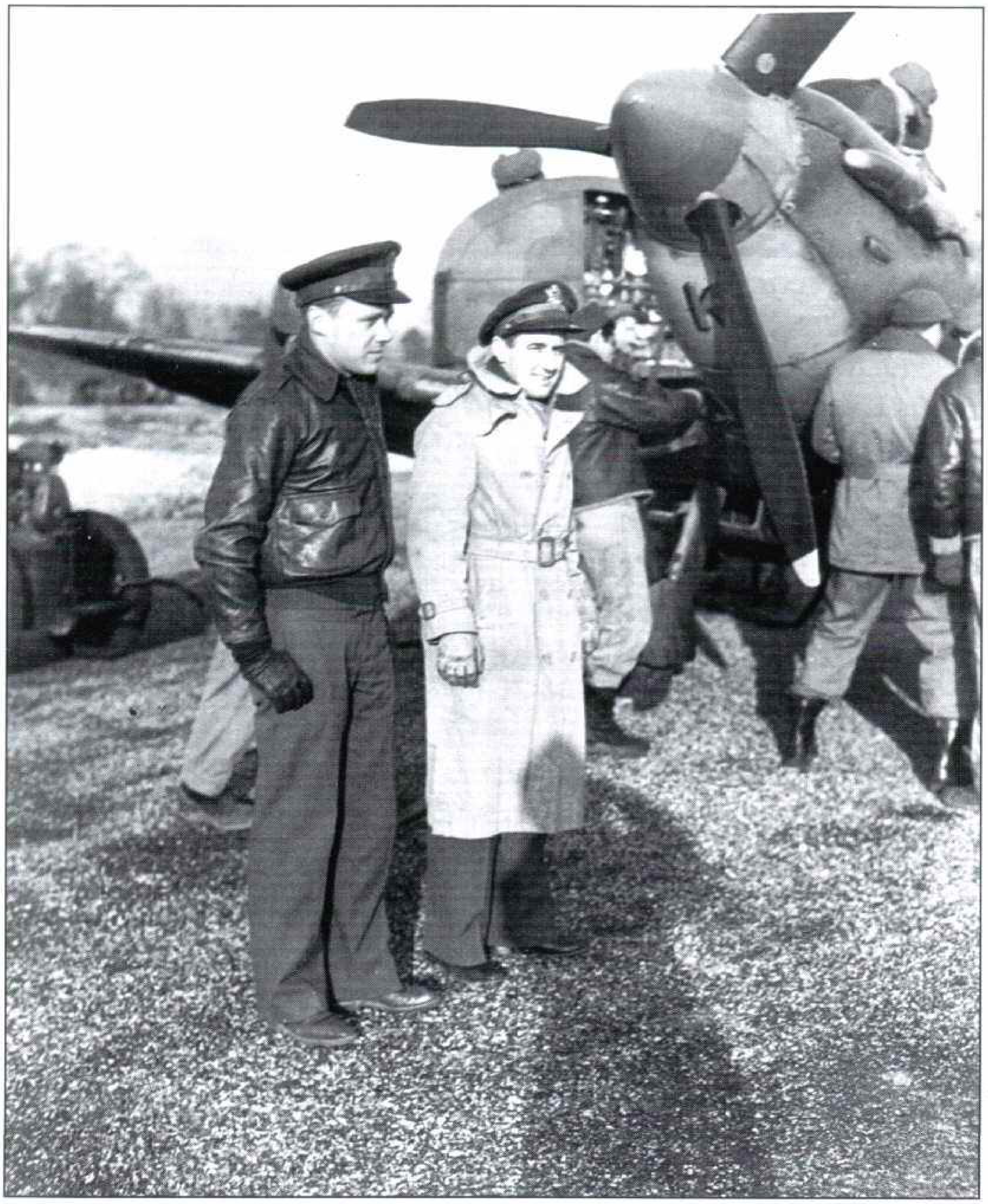
As late as December 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour, Observation Groups within the USAAF flew obsolete aircraft such as the North American O-47. In the late 1930s it was still believed that a crewman should hand-hold a camera in an open cockpit to take reconnaissance photos. USAAF design specifications demanded either high wing, parasol wing or mid-wing aircraft to provide unobstructed downward views.

In 1943 Brig. General Laurence Kuter redefined the mission of Observation to that of Reconnaissance - strategic and tactical. The new Tactical Reconnaissance, (Tac-R) mission required fast, low flying aircraft. Eventually the Mustang with automatic cameras revolutionized Tac-R in the USAAF; but as initial equipment 67th RG (Reconnaissance Group) squadrons in England operated second-hand Spitfire Mk Vs.

CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKINGS

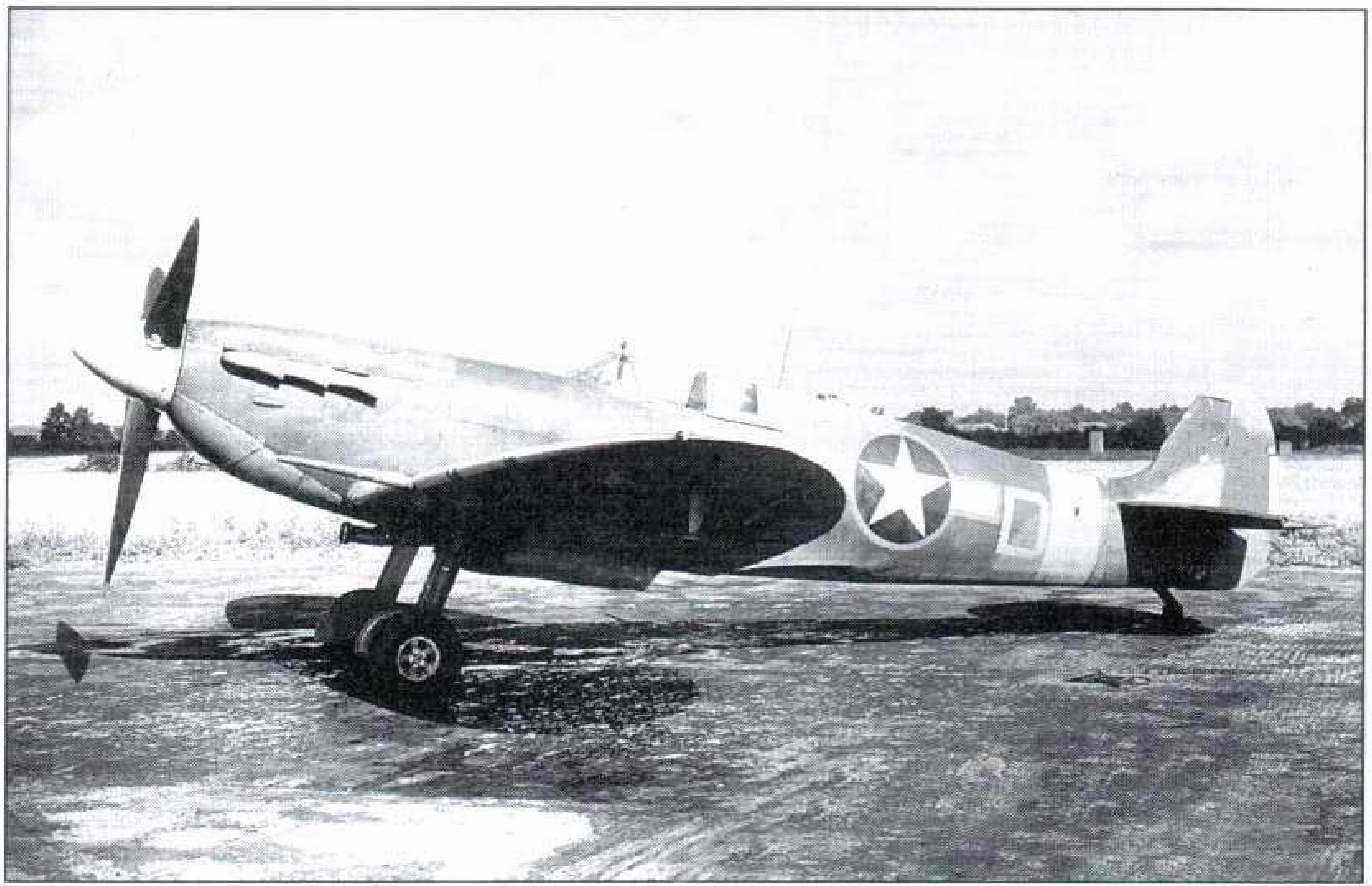
All 67th RG machines were camouflaged in the *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey* RAF Day Fighter scheme with *Medium Sea Grey* undersurfaces.

Code letters recorded on 12th TRS (Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, 15th TRS, 107th TRS, and 109th TRS were ZM, MX or WZ, AX, and VX respectively. The few Spitfires operated by the 153rd Liaison Squadron never received new code letters. In fact numerous examples exist of second-hand 31st FG and to a lesser extent 52nd FG Spitfires operating with the 67th RG, still in their old unit markings. Squadron code letters were generally 24" high, but colours and styles varied considerably as the photos in this chapter show.



In November 1942, Major George W. Peck, on the left, was C.O. of the 107th TRS. He stands next to Lt. Colonel Schott in front of a Spitfire. Peck was promoted to Colonel and became C.O. of the 67th RG on 6 December 1943. (Peck)

BM181, 'AX-D' was a 107th TRS Spitfire Mk VB used in the 1942-1943 period. Note the replacement rudder with a non-matching camouflage pattern. (R McCall)



EYES OF THE FIRST ARMY

When General H.H. Arnold relocated the 9th Air Force (Tactical) from the Mediterranean to England in late 1943, the IX FC (Fighter Command) was one of its key component organisations. The 67th RG was the first group assigned to IX FC. The 67th RG had been activated in September 1941, and when it arrived in England in September 1942, it was commanded by Colonel Frederick R. Anderson and initially assigned to the 8th Air Force. In October 1943 it was transferred to the IX FC, 9th Air Force.

The 67th RG became the 'eyes' of the U.S. First Army during the summer and autumn of 1944. Over time, the 67th RG controlled several tactical reconnaissance squadrons including the 12th TRS, 15th TRS, 107th TRS, 109th TRS and the 153rd Liaison Squadron, which are outlined below. All these squadrons operated Spitfires, and all but the 153rd later flew the F-6 (photographic reconnaissance) Mustang.

These Spitfires were generally the Mark VB and none carried cameras. Initially, 67th RG squadrons flew alongside RAF units to gain experience. Flight training, area orientation, visual observation of enemy targets, strafing and weather flights occupied the pilots' time, until the P-51A and F-6, with their automatic cameras, became available. From March 1944 onwards – now with Mustangs – the squadrons were tasked with making low-level photo runs from Cherbourg in France and north to Holland, to provide information for the D-Day landings.

Colonel George W. Peck, who had commanded the 107th TRS, was promoted to command the 67th RG from 6 December 1943 and remained in the job until the end of the war.

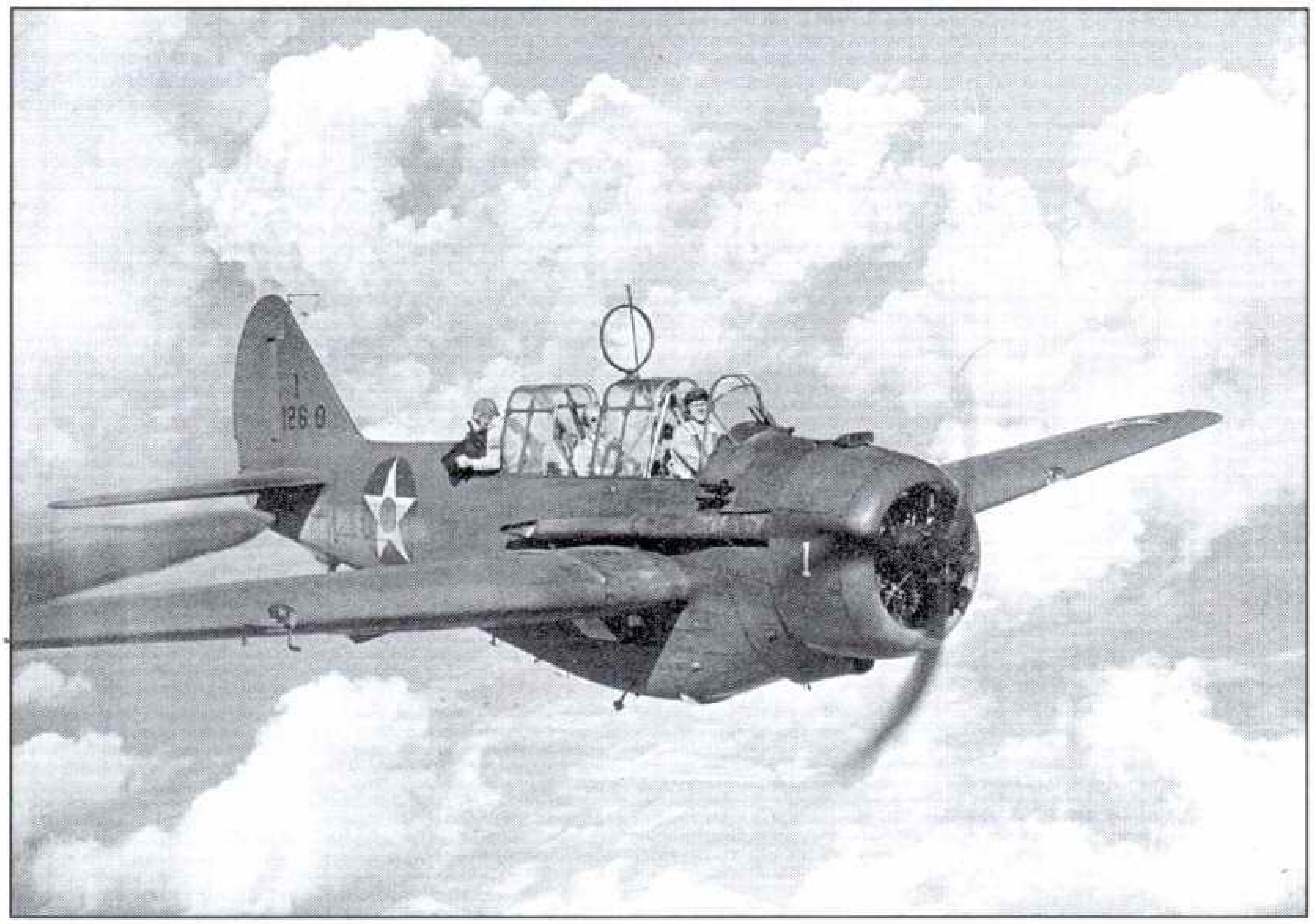
The 67th RG moved to France in July 1944.

Major Joe Thompson commanded the 109th TRS in the autumn of 1943. His 90 missions were the most by any pilot in the squadron. (J Thompson)

SQUADRONS OF THE 67TH RG

The 12th TRS

This Squadron joined the 67th RG at RAF Membury, Berkshire, England, in September 1942, with Spitfire Mk Vs and was transferred to the 10th RG* in June 1944. The 12th TRS dates back to WWI and unlike



The USAAF continued to believe, until 1942, that types such as this North American O-47 were the correct design for the mission of Observation. Note the crewman hand-holding a camera in the slipstream. The pregnant belly of the O-47 was covered with glass to provide a downward view. (USAAF)

---

[*] The 73rd Observation Group was activated in the same month as the 67th RG and the 73rd OG was renamed the 10th Photographic Group (Reconnaissance) in December 1943. The 10th RG was stationed in England at Chalgrove from February 1944, and was commanded by Colonel William B. Reed from 9 September, 1943 to mid-June 1944. The 10th RG moved to bases in France in August that year.

Lieutenant Stan Marsh of the 15th TRS, probably in early 1943, with 'R', a Spitfire not then marked with squadron code letters. (Marsh)

many other squadrons, it remained active through the lean inter-war years. Before WWII it operated a variety of slow, multi-crew, poorly armed Observation types in which a crewman hand-held a camera.

When the North Amerivan F-6 (P-51 Mustang) became standard for Tac-R squadrons, pilots of the 12th TRS achieved 22 aerial victories in the war, though none had been achieved in Spitfires.

The 15th TRS

The 15th TRS also dates from WWI and generally continued in service as an Observation Squadron until April 1942, when it became a Reconnaissance Squadron (Fighter). First attached to the 68th OG (Observation Group), it was transferred to the 73rd OG and then transferred to IX FC, 9th AF, on 30 December, 1943. While with IX FC it was first part of the 67th RG and then the 10th RG. Its first base in England was Aldermaston, from December 1943.

When the 31st Fighter Group was transferred to the 12th AF and departed for the MTO in November 1942, it left its Spitfire Mk V aircraft behind. The 15th TRS operated some of these, still with 31st FG code letters.

Captain Clyde East, the most famous Ace of all USAAF WWII Tac-R pilots, was a late-arriving member of the 15th TRS. East had joined the RCAF in June 1941 and was not transferred to the USAAF

In late 1942, 15th TRS ground crew, in heavy winter clothing, prepare this Spitfire Mk V for flight. (Marsh)

until January 1944. East, who scored his first victory on 6 June 1944, flew to the end of the war and is credited with 13 victories. Captain John Hoefker was credited with 8·5 and 2nd Lieutenant Leland Larson with 6·5. No victories was scored in Spitfires and the total for the squadron was 65.

The 107th TRS

This squadron, another WWI veteran, was demobilized in 1919 and reactivated as a National Guard unit in the 1920s. It was part of the 67th RG from the time it arrived at RAF Membury, in September 1942, until the end of the war. It moved to a base in France on 28 June 1944, three weeks after D-Day. Four aerial victories are credited to the squadron, none of them in Spitfires.

The 109th TRS

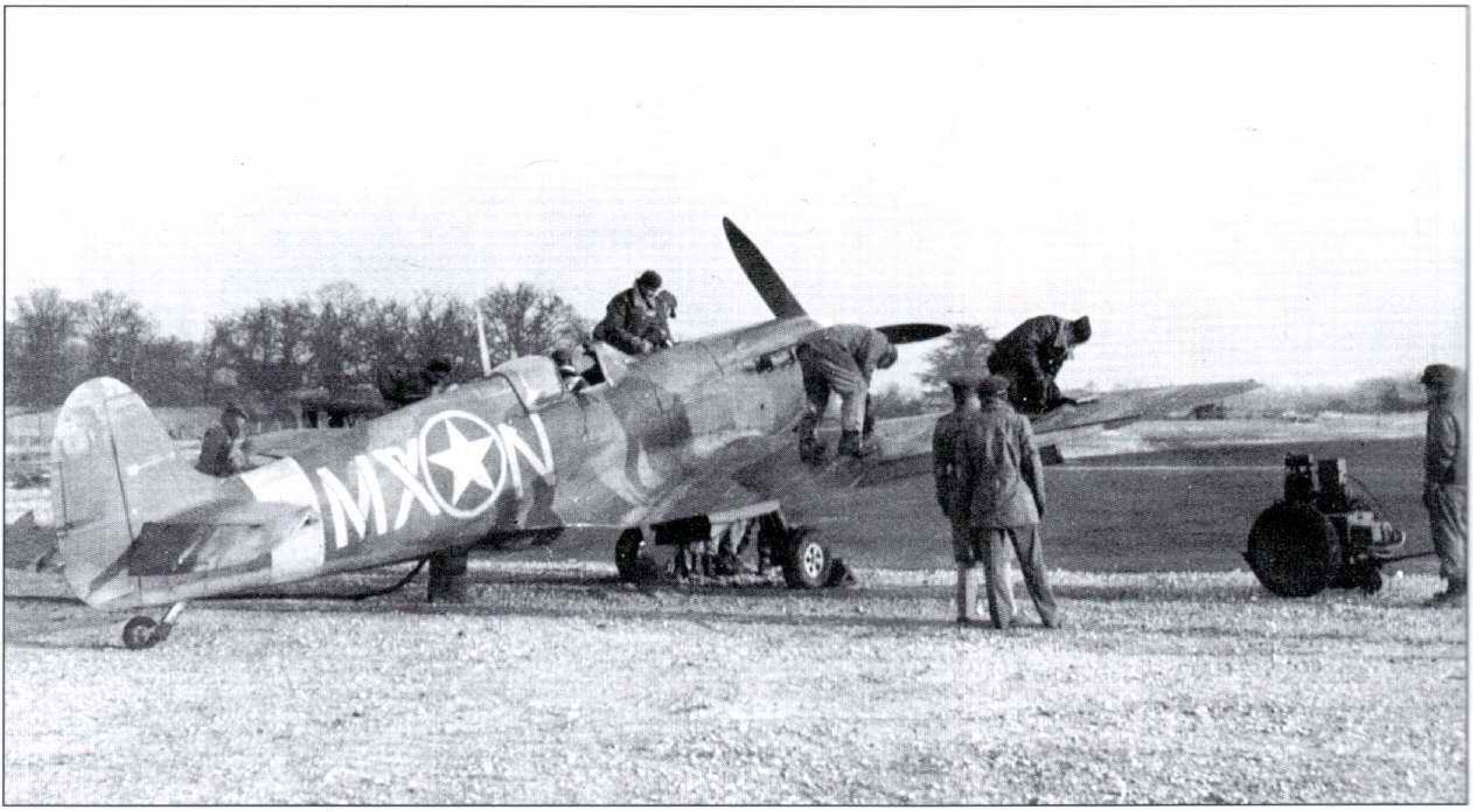
As another National Guard squadron, the 109th Observation Squadron was re-designated, in May 1943, as the 109th Reconnaissance Squadron (Fighter) in the 67th RG. After arriving a Membury, in September 1942 and being equipped with Spitfires. It served with the 67th RG and flew missions from England before moving to a base in France (now with Mustangs) in July, 1944. Eleven victories were credited to the 109th, including two by Captain Frank B. Robison. However, none had been achieved in Spitfires.

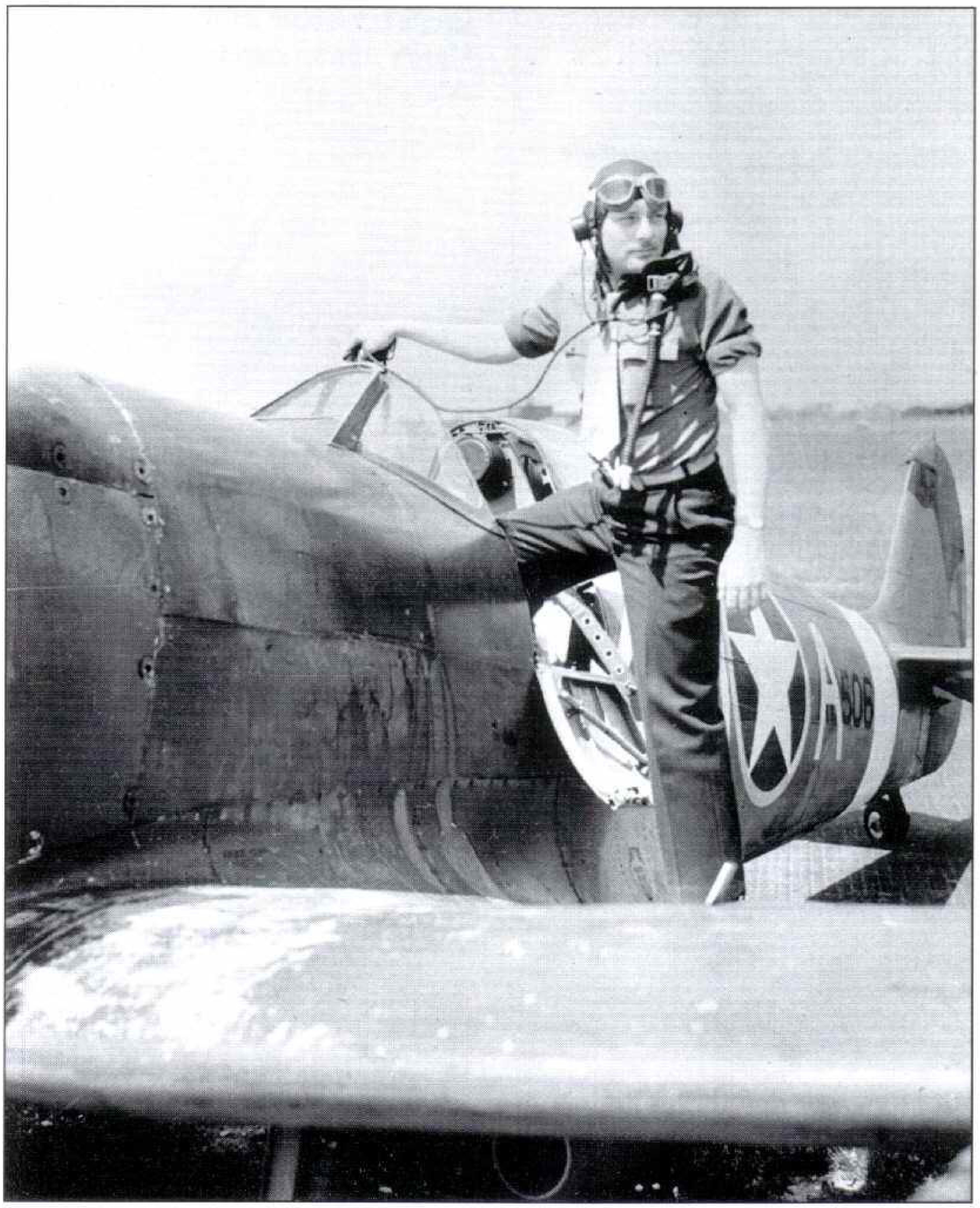
The 153rd LS

Originally designated an Observation Squadron, it was attached to the 67th RG in September 1941, and transferred to the IX Fighter Command in December 1943. It was then attached to the U.S. First Army. The 153rd LS (Liaison Squadron) operated a few Spitfires marked with the code letters of other squadrons.

Tactical reconnaissance was completely different from strategic reconnaissance, as performed by the 7th PG, whose pilots operated at extremely high altitude and unarmed. Tac-R pilots often flew at treetop level to get their photos and engaged in dog fights or strafed enemy targets. Several Aces were members of Tac-R squadrons.

When the USAAF 31st Fighter Group was transferred to the 12th AF and flew new Spitfire Mk Vs in North Africa, it left the old Spitfires in England. The 15th TRS of the 67th RG was given Spitfires marked with 31st FG code letters 'MX' and this is one of them. The USAAF 78th FG also used call letters MX. Quite confusing. Note the machines serial in tiny 1" characters on the upper fin. (Marsh)

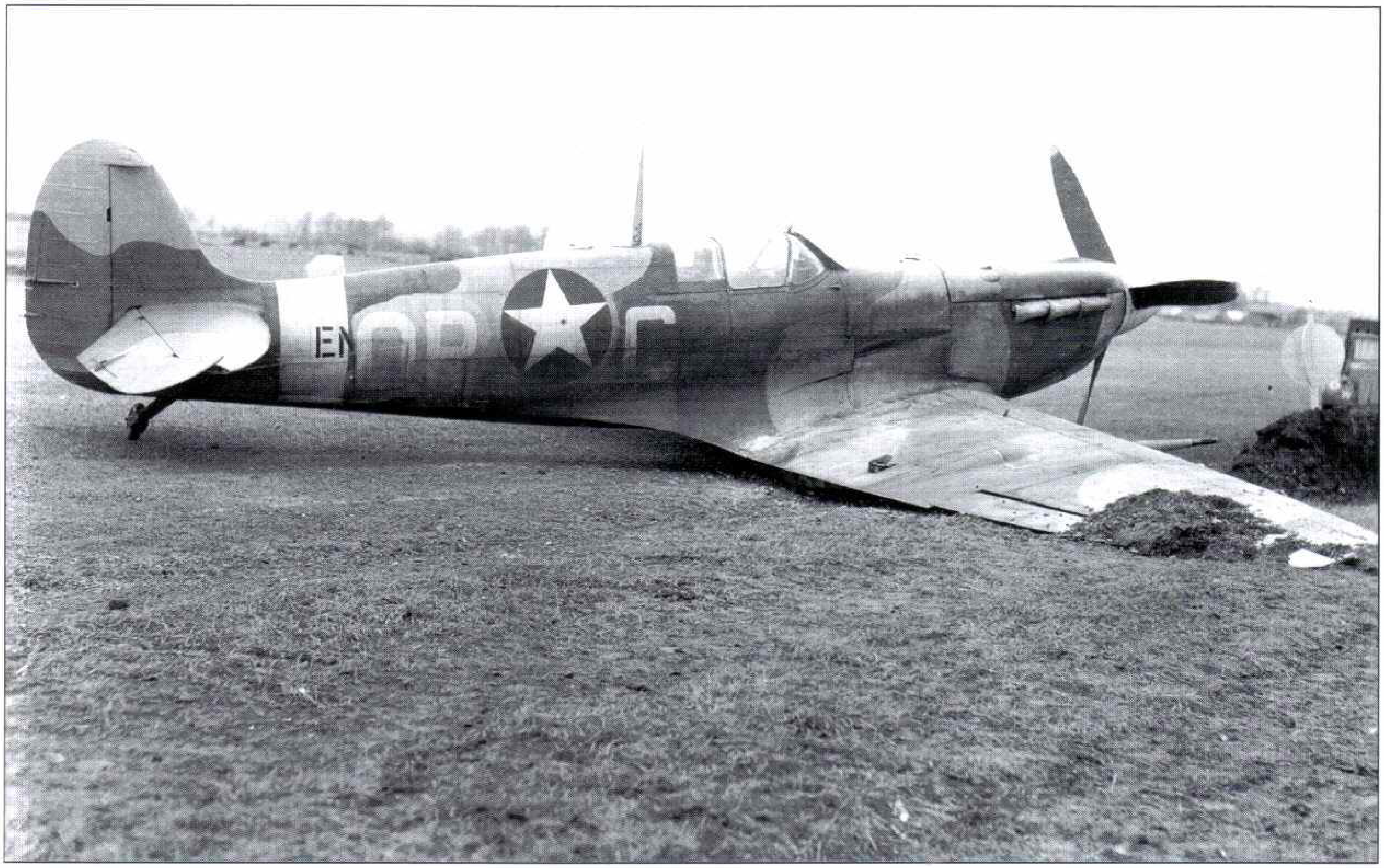


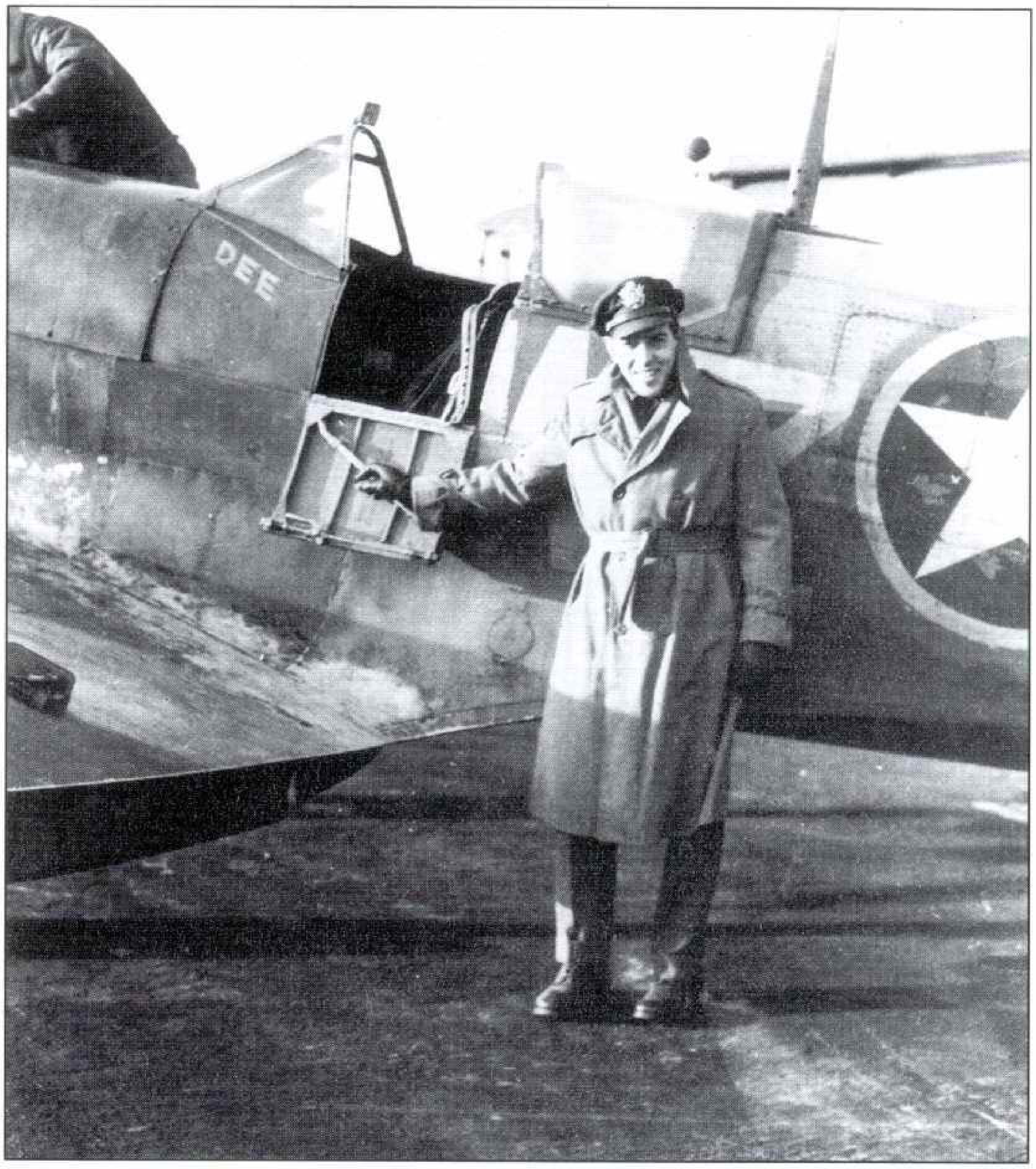


Major Jim Haun commanded the 12th TRS at the time the squadron went to England. Here he enters the cockpit of Spitfire Mk V AD506, 'ZM -A'. (J Florence)

Below, a landing accident involving a Spitfire Mk VB 'QP-C' of the 153rd LS on 1 December 1942.

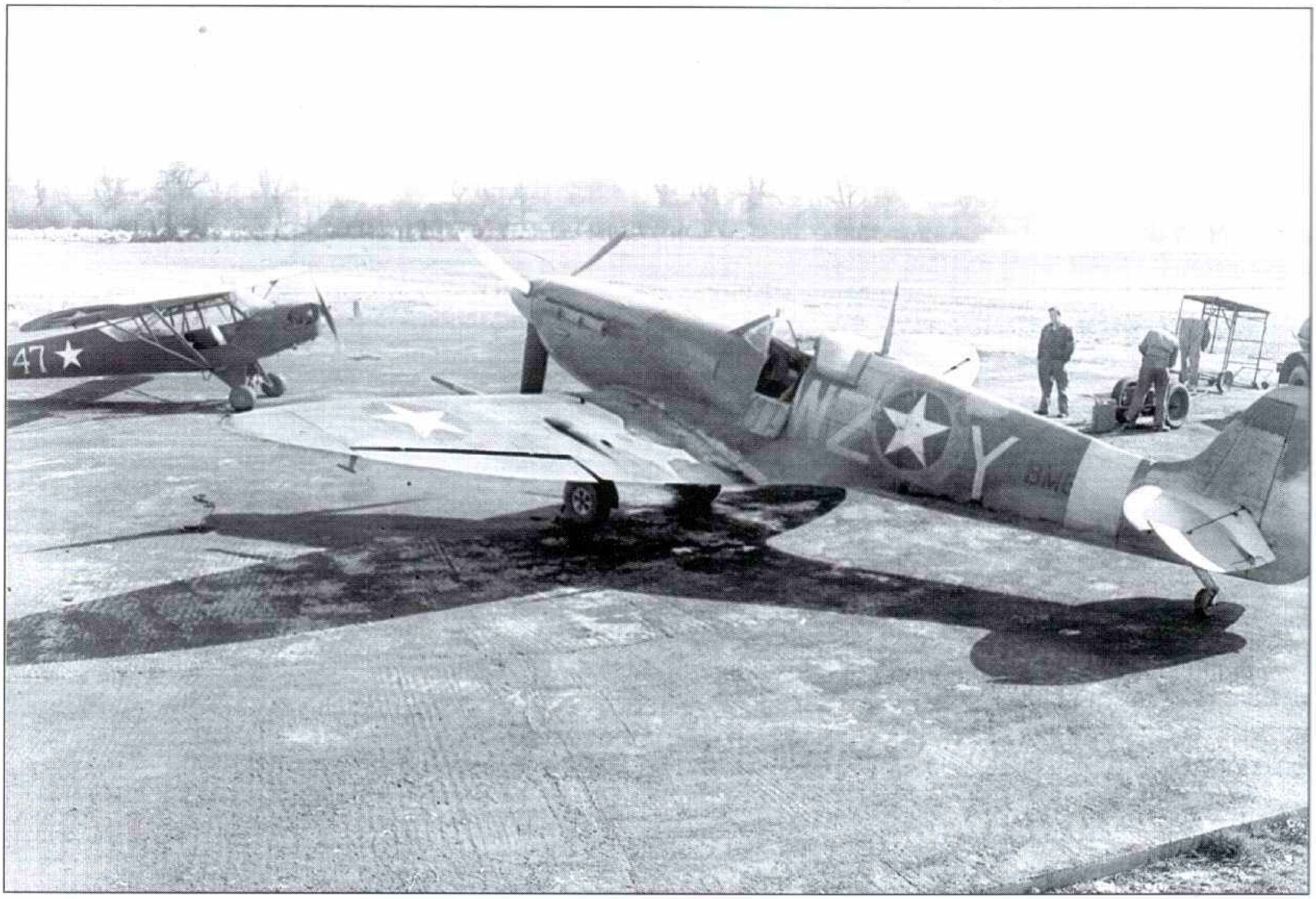
One possible identity for this aircraft is EN766, listed as damaged in 2nd FS service, December 1942, and later transferred to 153rd LS. (W Dyche)

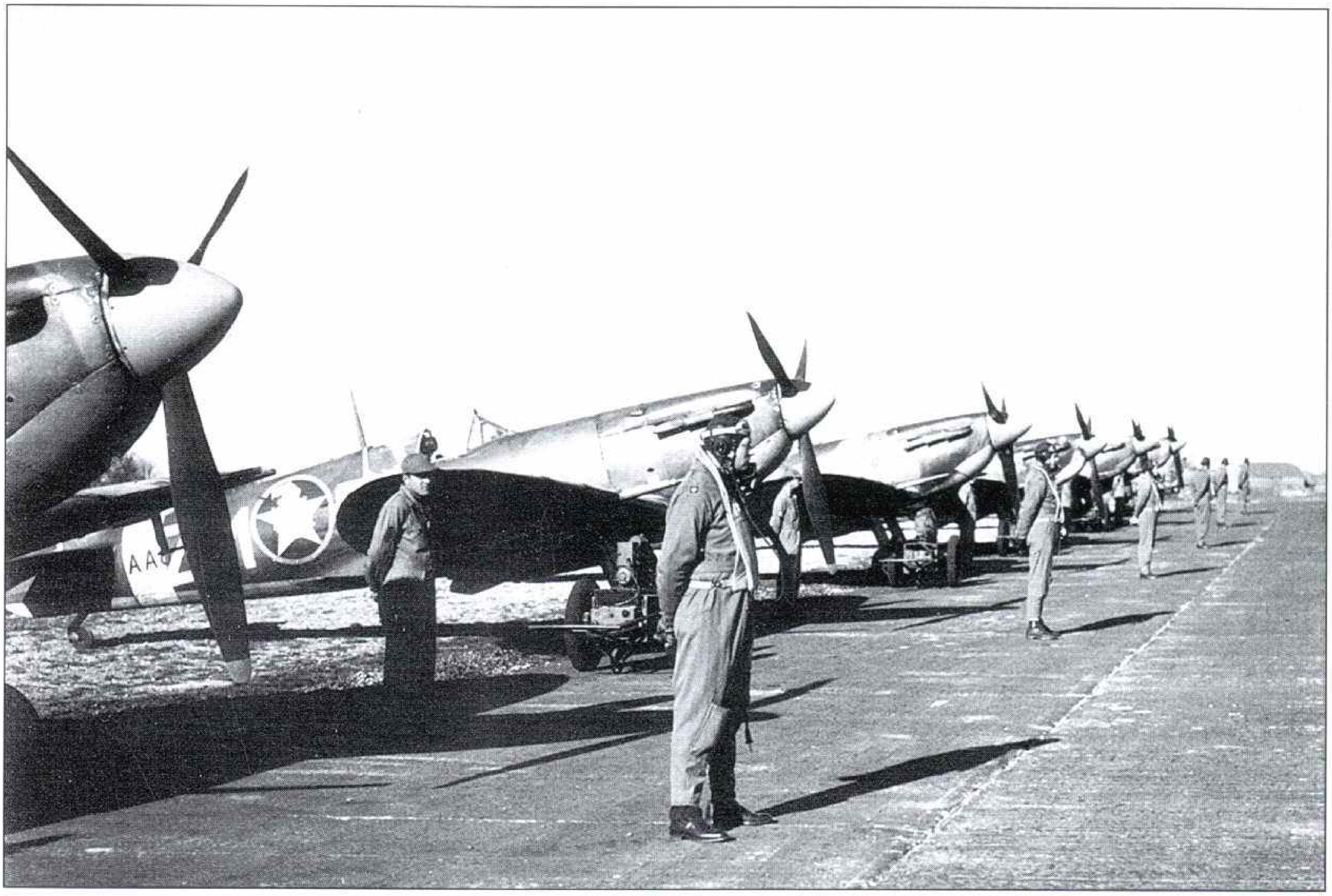




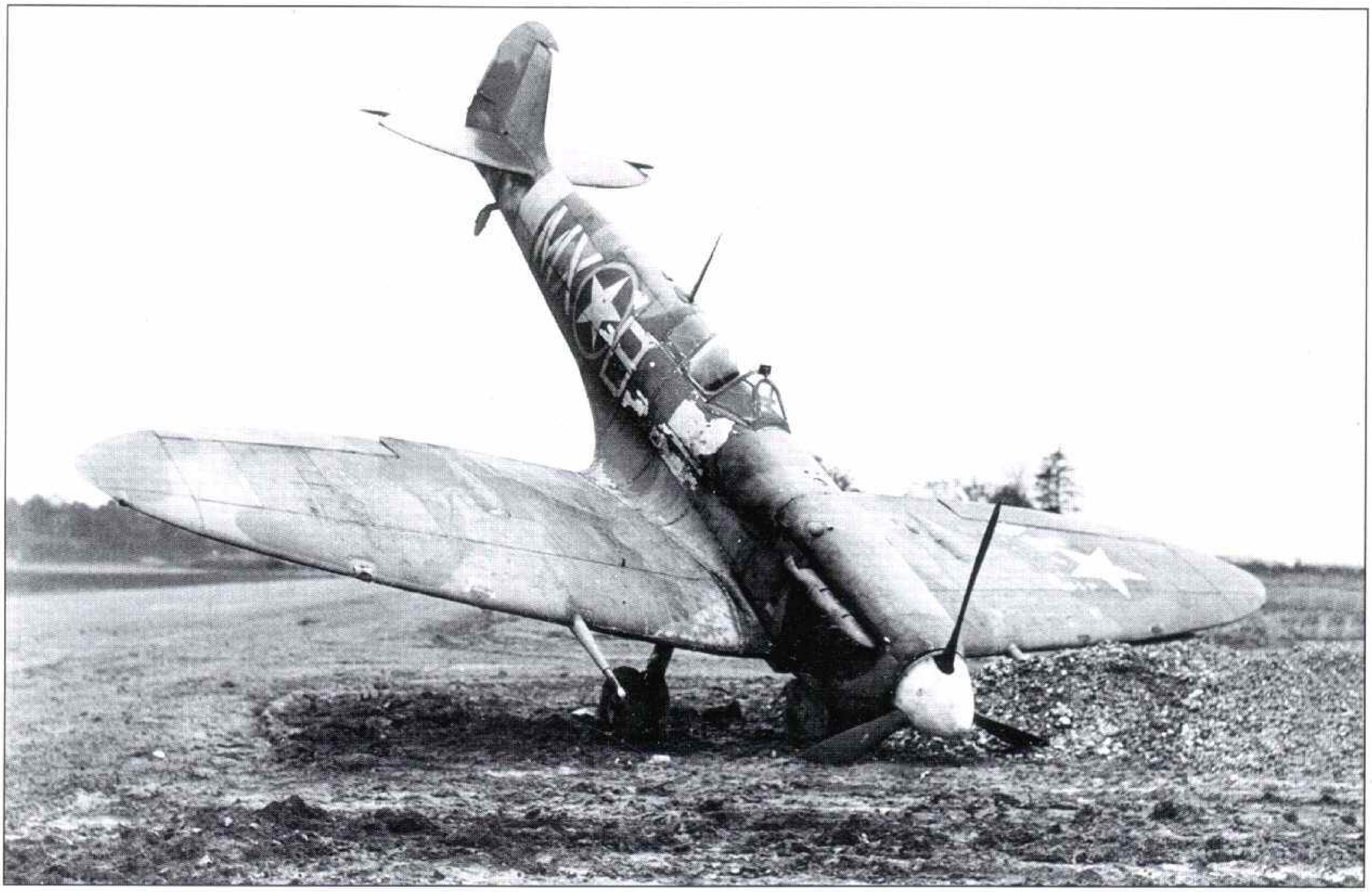
Captain Webber of the 15th TRS, in March 1943, stands next to 'Dee'. (Marsh)

This photo, dated 14 March 1943, shows Spitfire MkVB 'WZ-Y' (probably BM635). The aircraft was operated by the 15th TRS, 67th RG, at Membury, England. The previous owner, the 31st FG, was by then in North Africa. (USAAF)

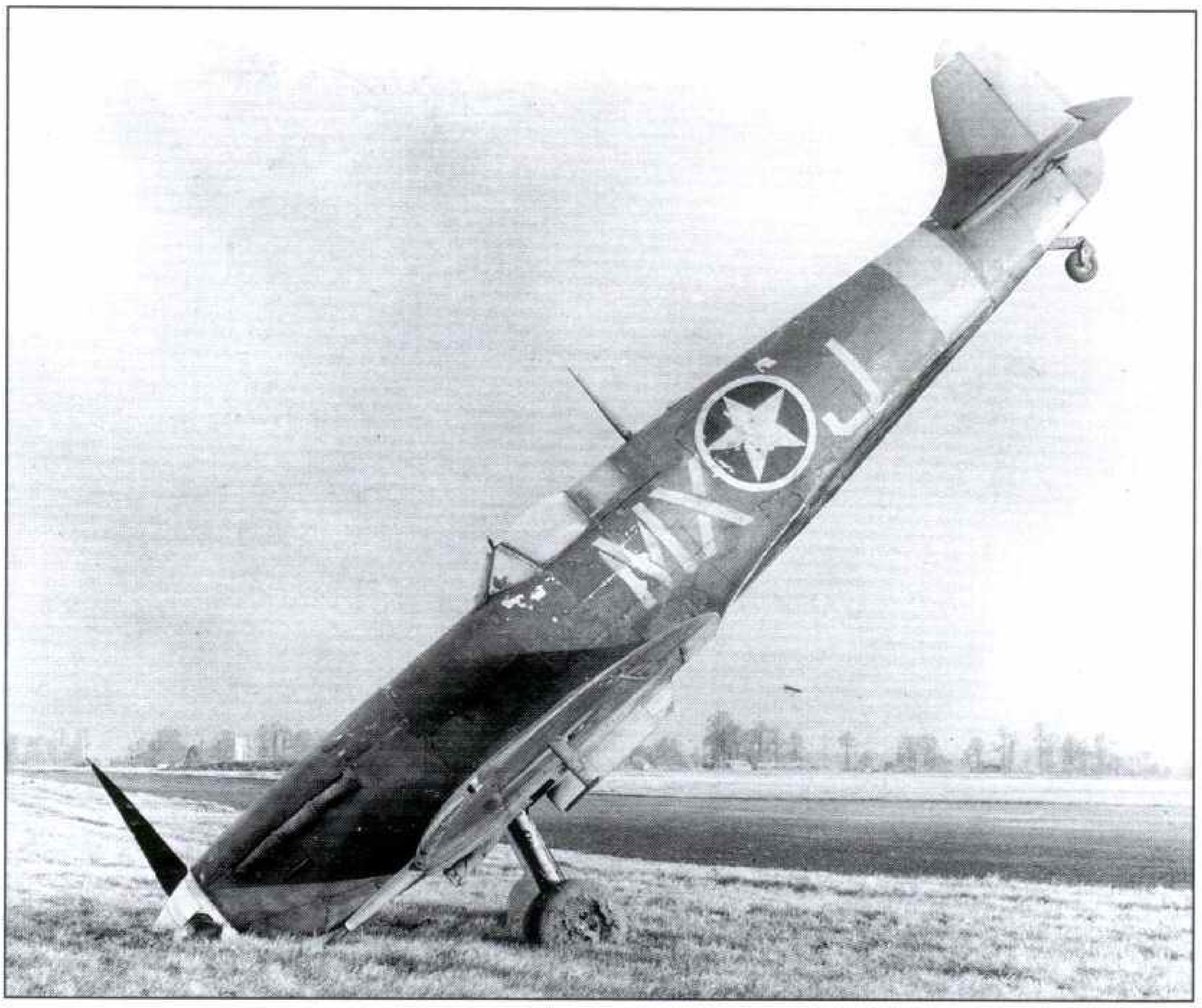




Brig. General R.C. Candee was inspecting the 12th TRS on 20 April 1943, when this photo was taken. Note the improvised star on the second Spitfire Mk V, created by partly overpainting the RAF roundel. (USAAF)

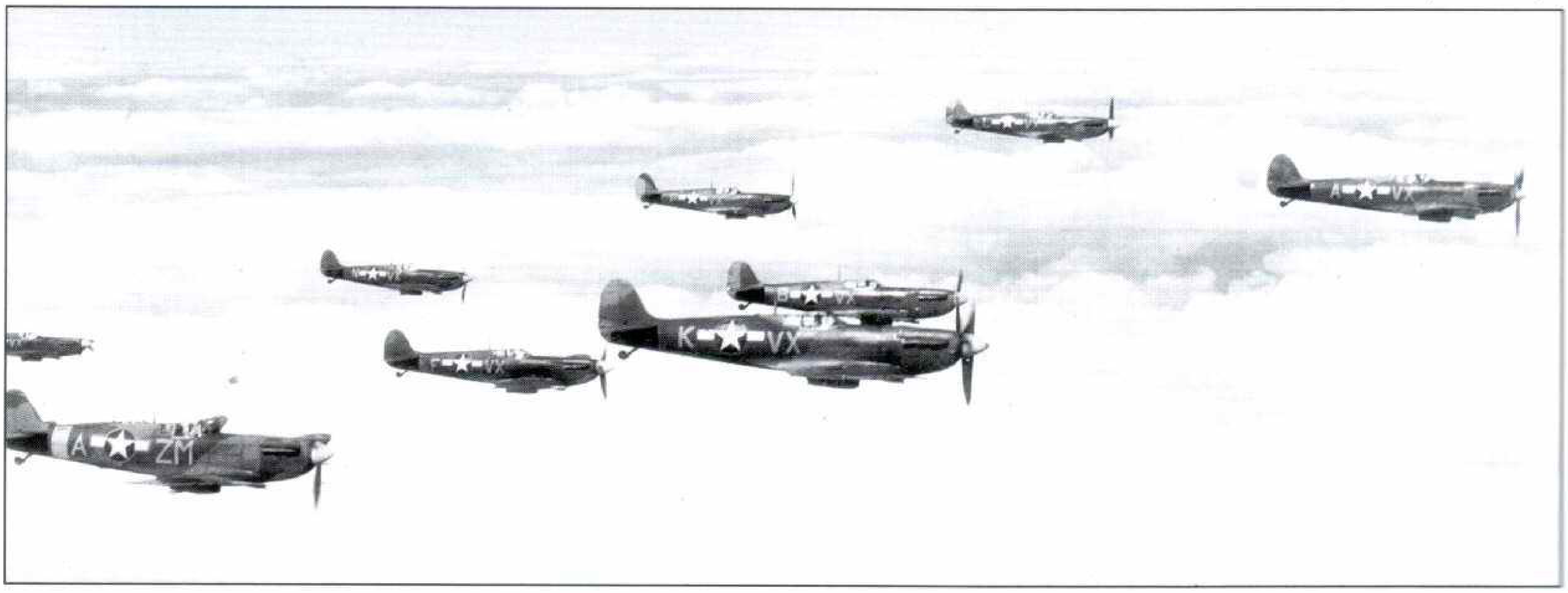


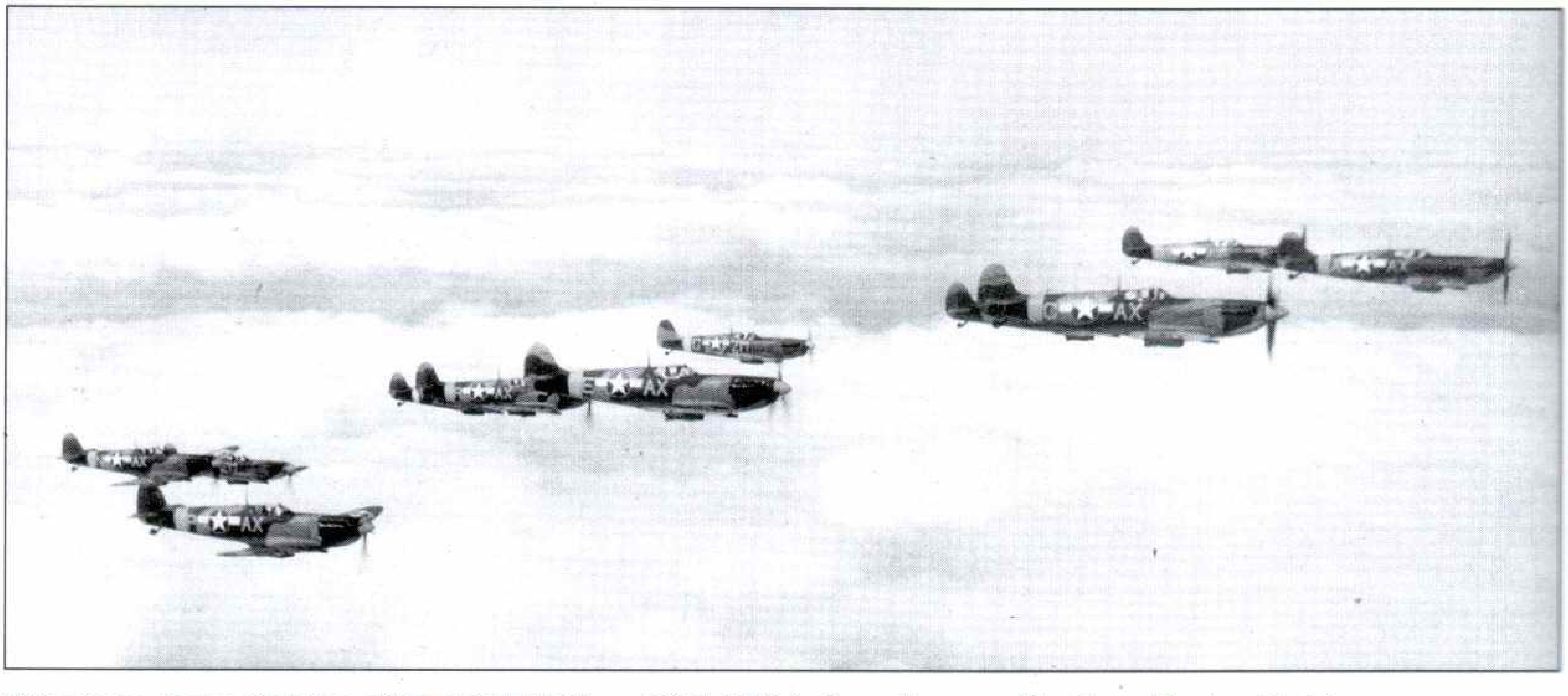
A well worn Spitfire Mk VB, probably either a 15th TRS or 153rd LS machine, awaits recovery and repair. (W Dyche)



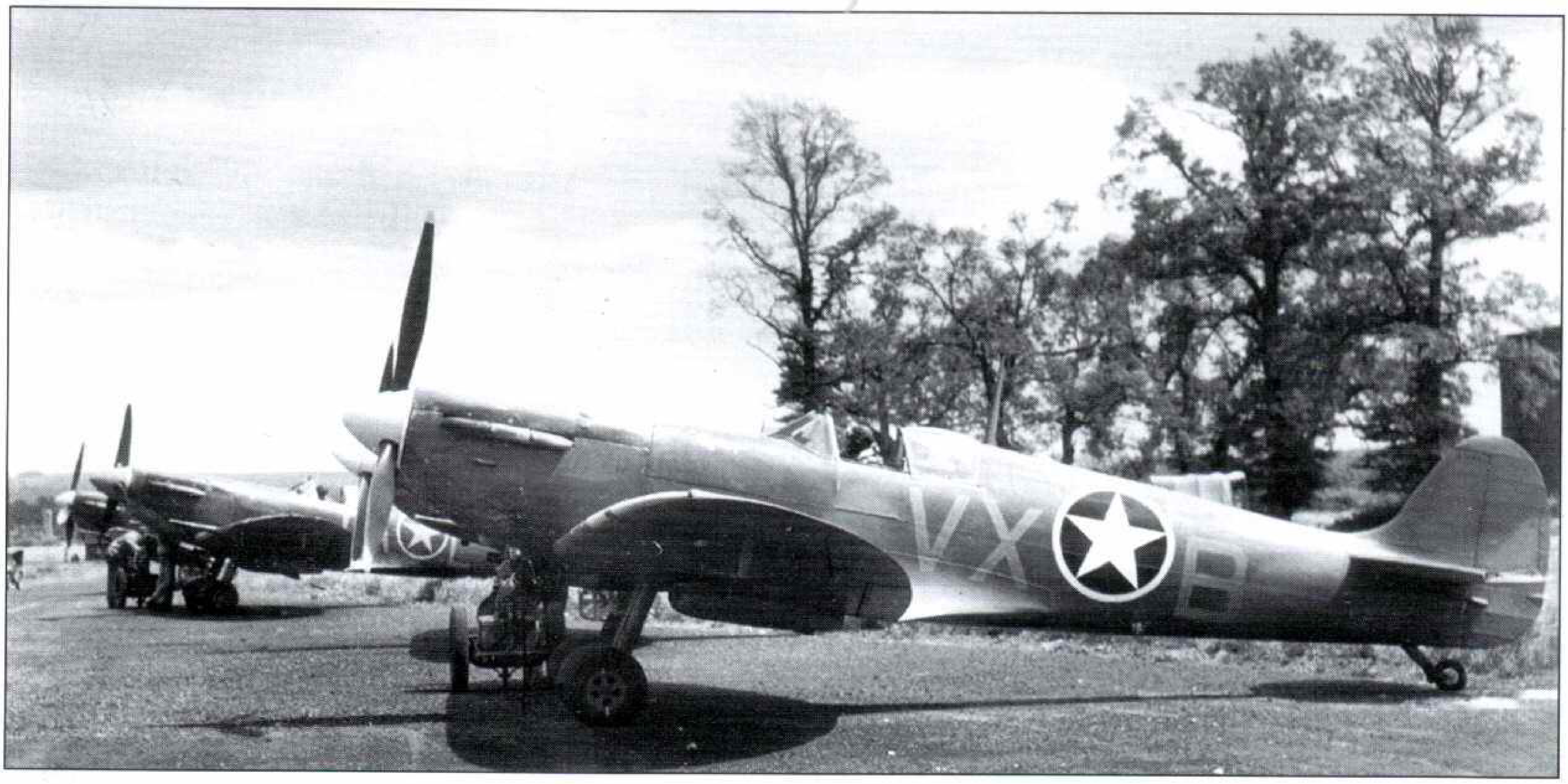
Both the 15th TRS and the 153rd LS operated Spitfires coded 'MX' cast off by the departed 31st FG. This 28 December 1942 photo shows 'MX-J', nosed over off the runway, but not badly damaged in the soft earth. (W Dyche)

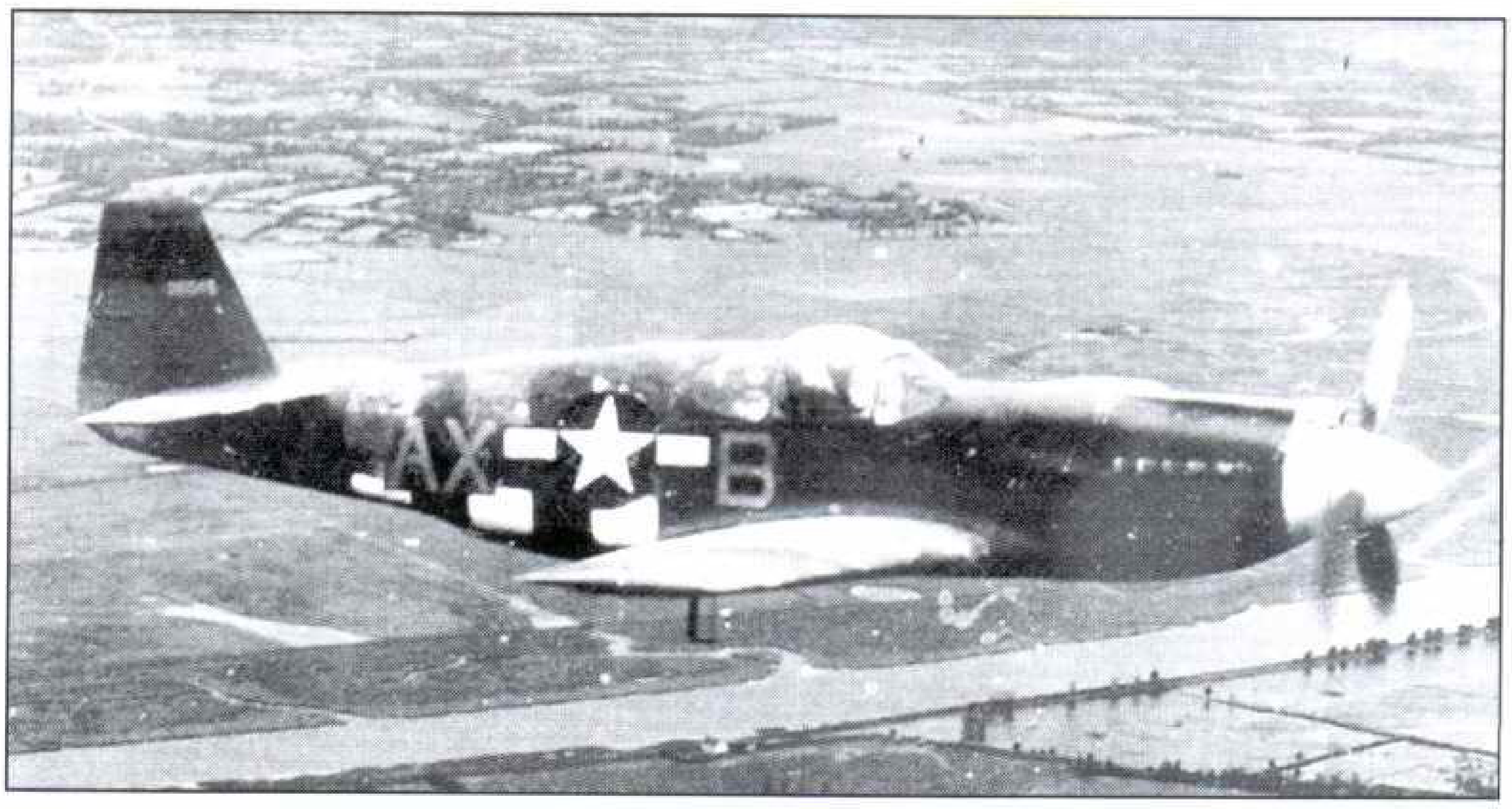
Spitfires of the 12th TRS and 109th TRS flew together for this publicity photo. The 12th TRS call letters were 'ZM' and the 109th's, 'VX'. (USAAF)





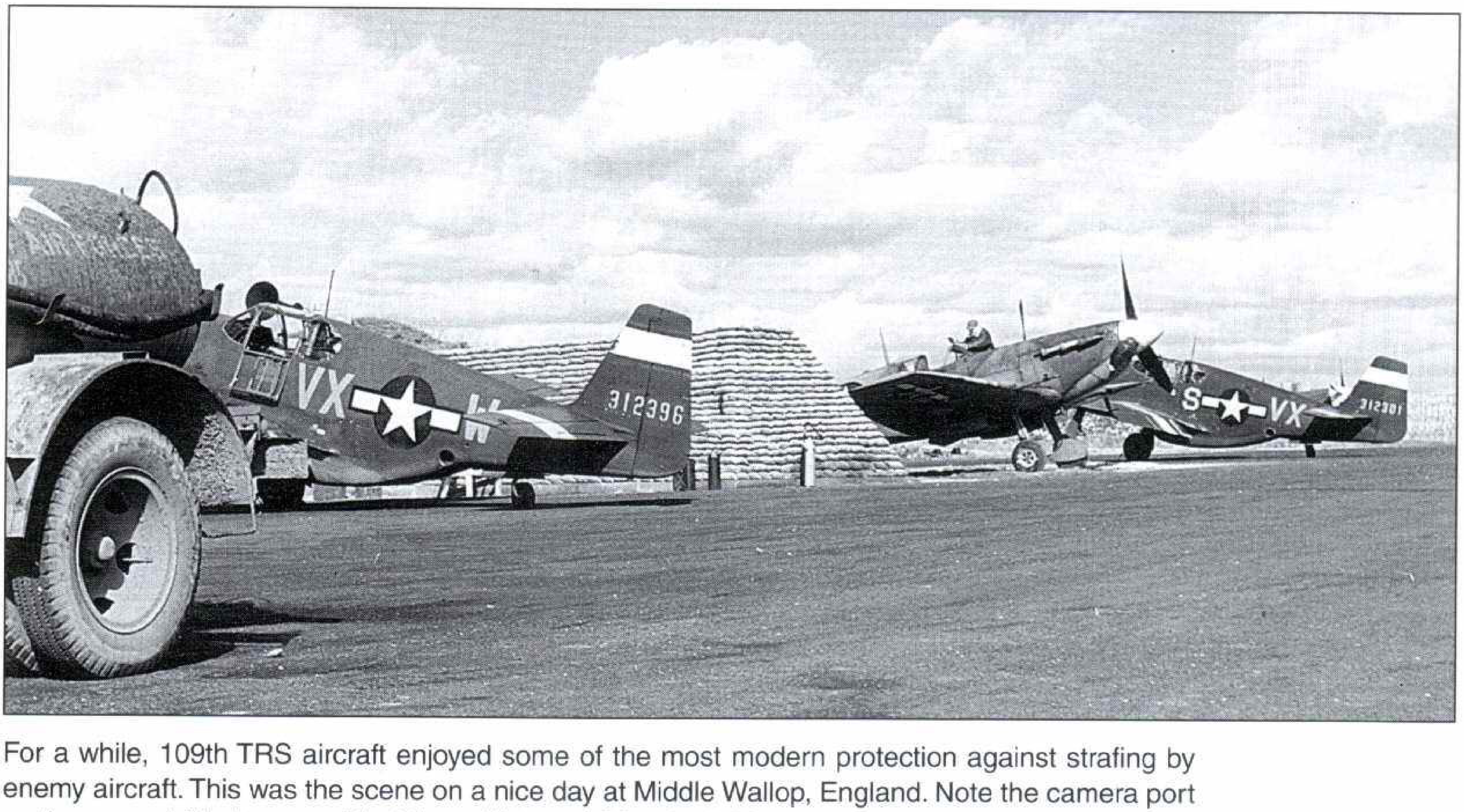
This photo shows Spitfires of the 107th TRS and 12th TRS in formation over Southern England in late 1942 or early 1943. Aircraft with code letters 'AX' belonged to the 107th TRS and those marked 'ZM' were with the 12th TRS. (USAAF)



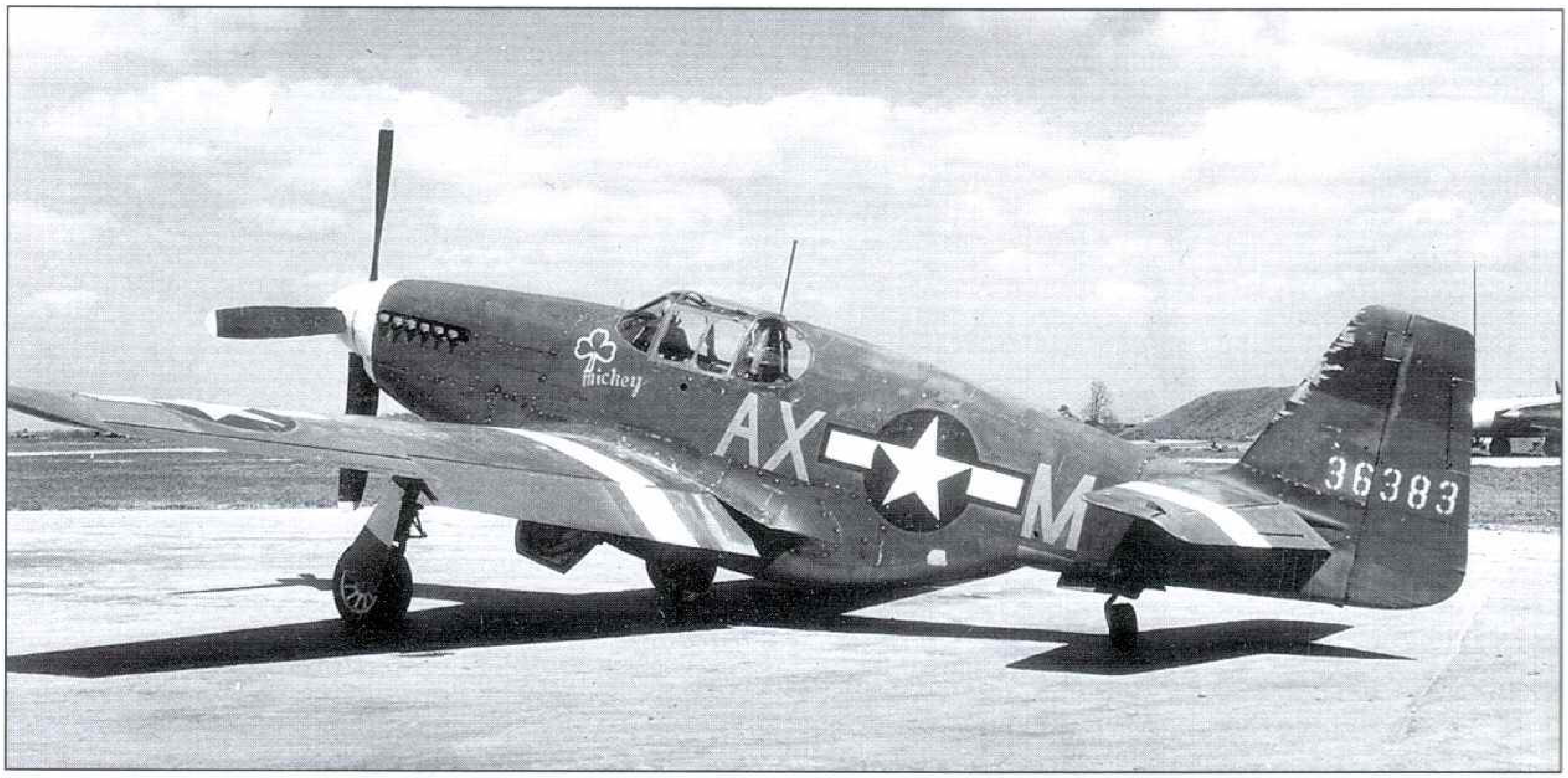


109th TRS Spitfires Mk Vs with freshly painted markings, including grey 24" high code letters and white spinners. Areas on the fuselage side where previous markings have been painted out, are a shade between *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey*, quite possibly USAAF *Olive Drab*. (W Dyche)

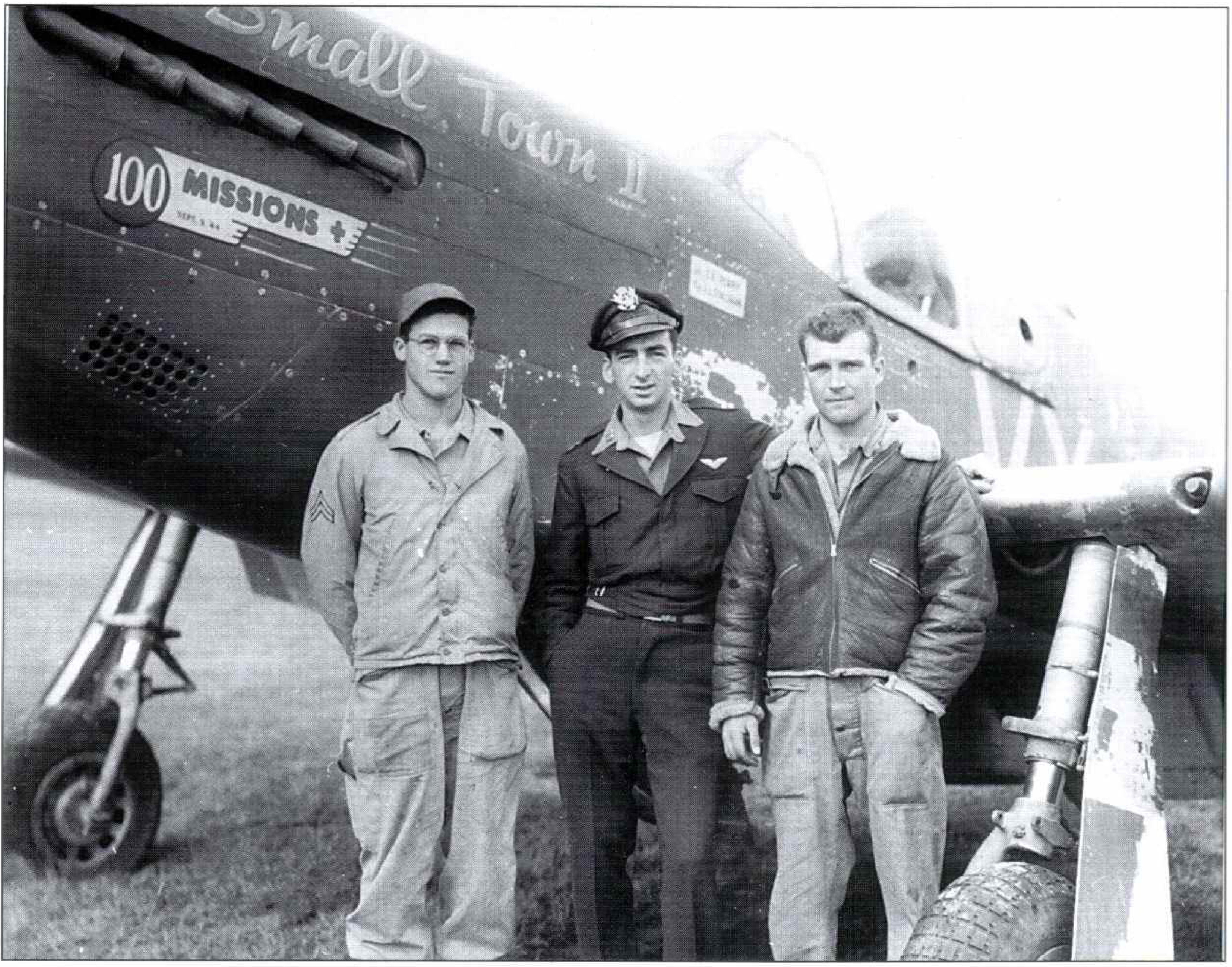
Left, this F-6B-NA 43-6046 (ex P-51A-1-NA), was operated by the 107th TRS, in about August 1944. Note the faint 'shadow' where the invasion stripes have been removed from the upper fuselage. (Selfridge Air Base Museum)



For a while, 109th TRS aircraft enjoyed some of the most modern protection against strafing by enemy aircraft. This was the scene on a nice day at Middle Wallop, England. Note the camera port on the nearest Mustang, and that the call letters 'VX' on both Mustangs were applied differently. The two Mustangs are 43-12396, and 43-12301, both P-51B-1-NAs (J Thompson)

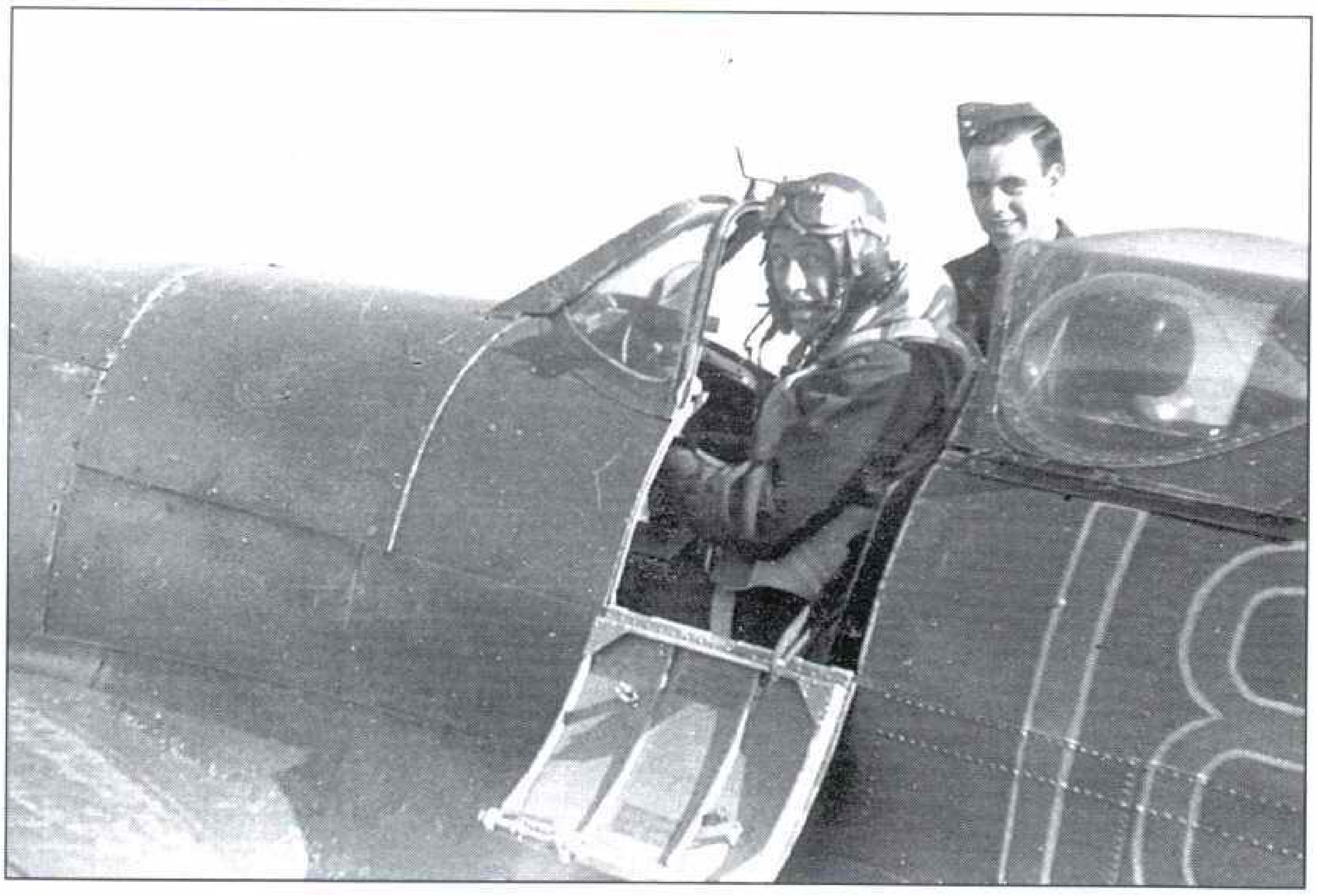


'Mickey', with a three-leaf clover charm painted on, was a P-51B-5-NA Mustang of the 107th TRS, at RAF Earl's Colne. There is a B-26 Marauder in the background. (W Dyche)



From the left; Corporal Bill du Fosse, Captain John Perry and Crew Chief, Sergeant Stallman, of the 109th TRS. They stand in front of Perry's F-6C Mustang named 'Small Town II' coded 'VX-K'. Note the bulged Malcolm hood and small camera port in the rear, fixed portion, of the canopy. Beneath the exhaust stacks, the 100-missions symbol is dated September 9 1944. (du Fosse)

THE 7TH PHOTO RECONNAISSANCE GROUP



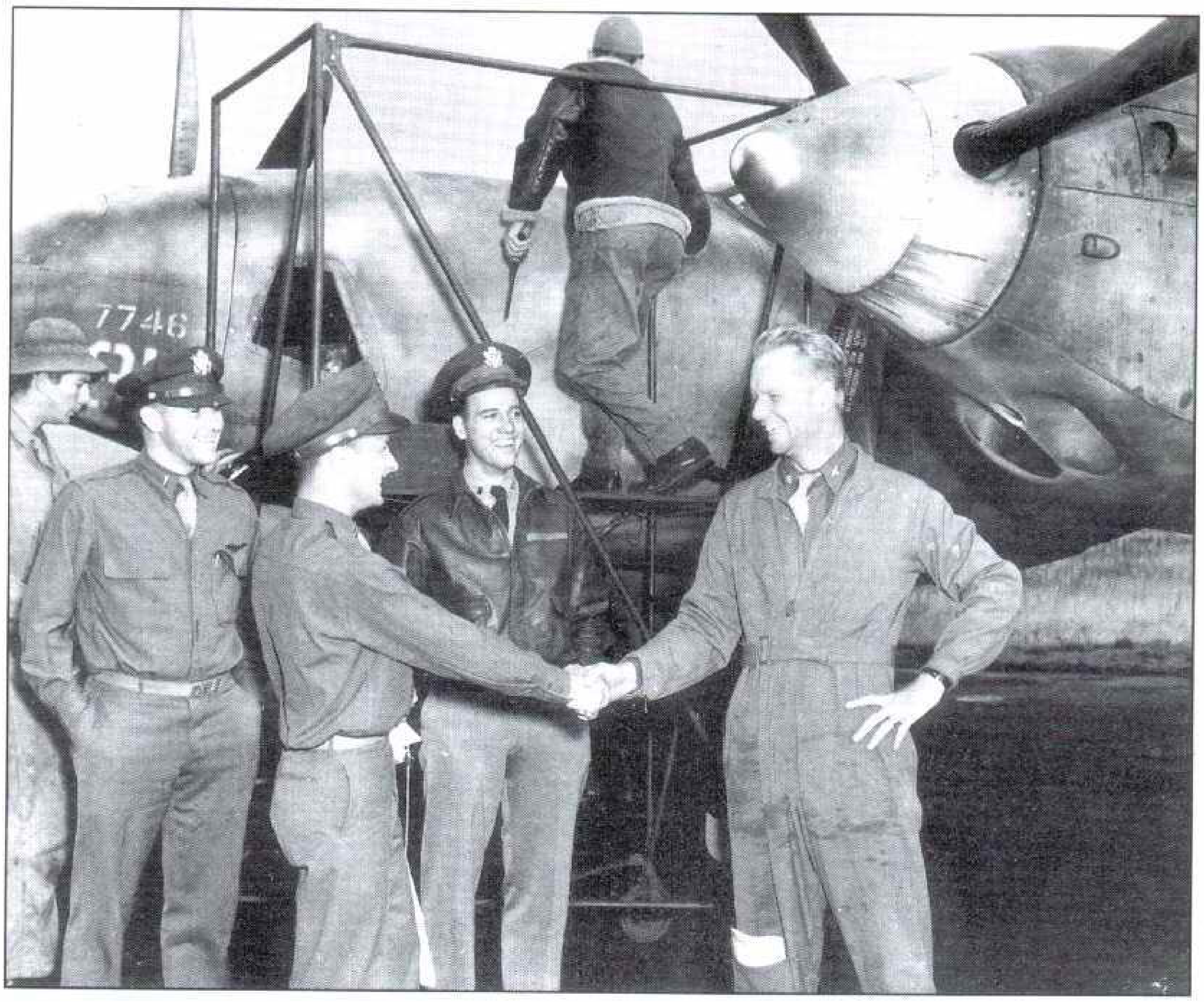
Pilot Officer Robert Dixon while training with 6 OTU, at RAF Dyce, Aberdeen, Scotland. He later transferred to the 7th PG USAAF. This photo is a good example of the early PR Spitfire cockpit hood with side bubbles to improve rear and downward view, before the Malcolm hood was introduced. (C Parker)

When the 7th PG (Photographic Reconnaissance Group) reached its largest complement in 1944, it was comprised of four squadrons; the 13th PS (Photographic Squadron), 14th PS, 22nd PS and the 27th PS.

Lockheed F-5 Lightnings were operated by all four Squadrons in the Group from January 1943 until the Spitfire PR XI's introduction on 3 November 1943. Initially the Spitfires were spread through all the 7th PG squadrons, but before long were concentrated solely in the 14th PS which became the only Reconnaissance Spitfire squadron in the USAAF. However, the F-5 continued as the Group's primary PR type, with three of the four squadrons flying them. This chapter briefly mentions all the 7th PG Squadrons, then concentrates on the 14th PS as the sole Spitfire squadron.

The 13th PS

The 13th PS was formed in June 1942, at Lowry Field, Colorado and the pilots logged time in Piper Cubs before the first F-4 arrived in August. Major James G. Hall was the first C.O. and after sufficient training, the Squadron was posted to England, arriving on 24 November, 1942. The squadron was assigned to the 8th AF and in January 1943, its first F-5A (P-38G) arrived. Major Hall wanted to benefit from the RAF's existing experience and be near the centre of RAF photographic reconnaissance operations, at RAF Benson, Oxfordshire. Hall asked to be moved closer and in February 1943, Mount Farm, only five miles from Benson, became the home of the 13th PS. Major Hall undertook the Squadron's (and the 8th AF) first PR mission on 28 March, 1943.

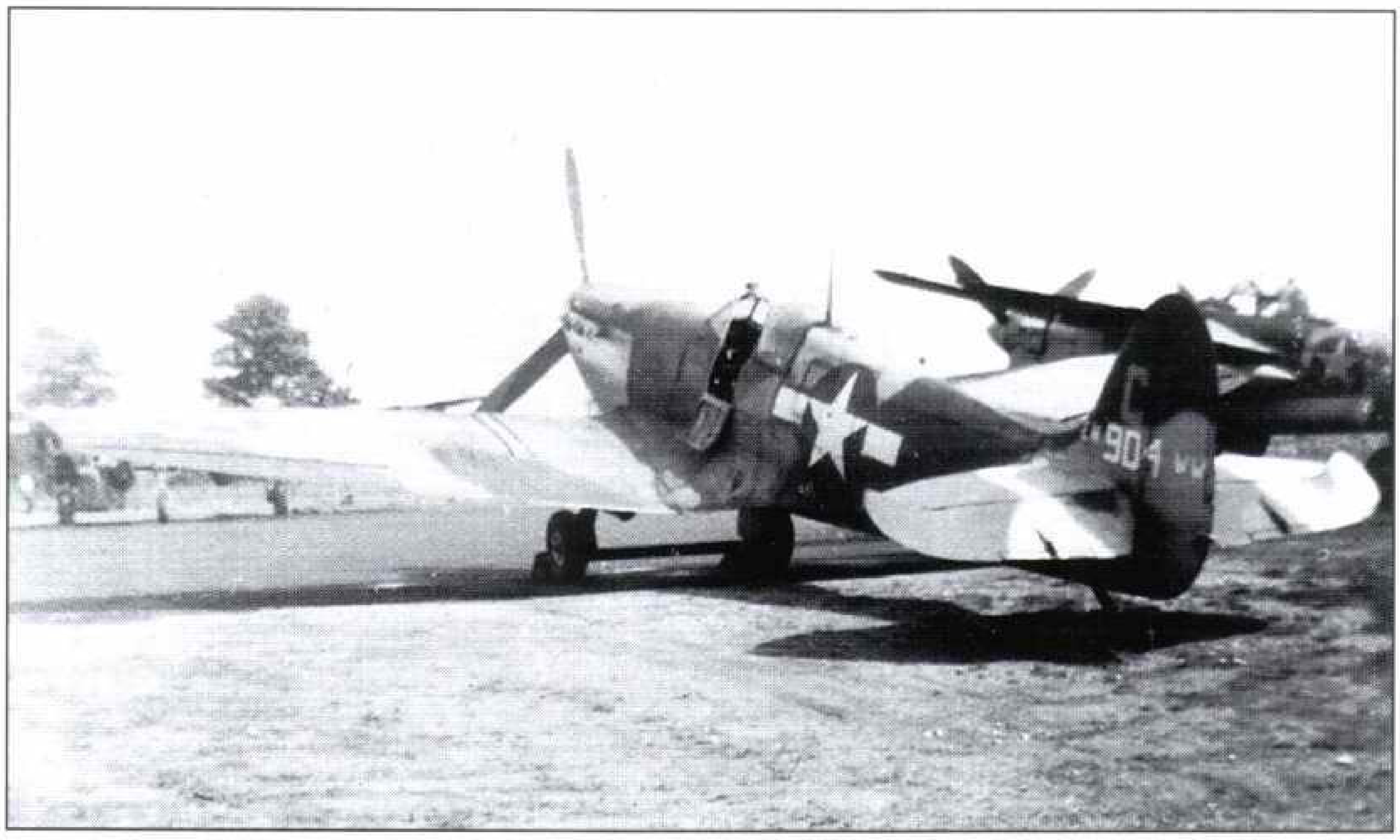


From the left are Lieutenant Harlan Fricke, Captain J. Max Campbell, Captain George Nesselrode and Major Marshall Wayne. Major Wayne was a 1936 Olympic diving champion. Behind them is a Lockheed F-5 Lightning, '7746', painted with the USAAF 'Haze' camouflage scheme. This style of high altitude camouflage' and the later 'Synthetic Haze' scheme differed markedly from the Spitfires RAF colour scheme. 'Haze' camouflage is covered in the book US Air Force Colors 1942-1945 European and Mediterranean Theatres of War, by Dana Bell. (Mayden)

The 14th PS

Back in the United States, a new Army Air Base was opened in August 1942, near Colorado Springs, and the newly formed 14th PS moved there. Days later, 1st Lieutenant Edward Peterson lost an engine on takeoff, crashed and was killed – the base was renamed Peterson Field. In March 1943, the 14th PS received its C.O., Captain Marshall Wayne, and in April, ground personnel, (but not pilots) were transported to Fort Dix, New Jersey and then sailed to Greenock, Scotland and moved quickly on to Mount Farm, England. The 14th PS pilots arrived in mid-July 1943 and Captain James M. Campbell flew the squadron's first combat mission, in an F-5, on 26 June, 1943.

Because the F-5 Lightnings were committed solely to combat missions, the 13th and 14th PS were provided with five old Spitfire Mk Vs in early June, to use as navigation trainers. These Spitfires were not camera-equipped and never flew operational sorties.



The symbol 'WW' on a USAAF aircraft signified 'War Weary', meaning the aircraft was unsuitable for combat and should be used only for training. EN904 'C' was a clipped-wing Spitfire Mk V used for local area orientation around Mount Farm, Oxfordshire, England, by the 14th PS. (Mayden)

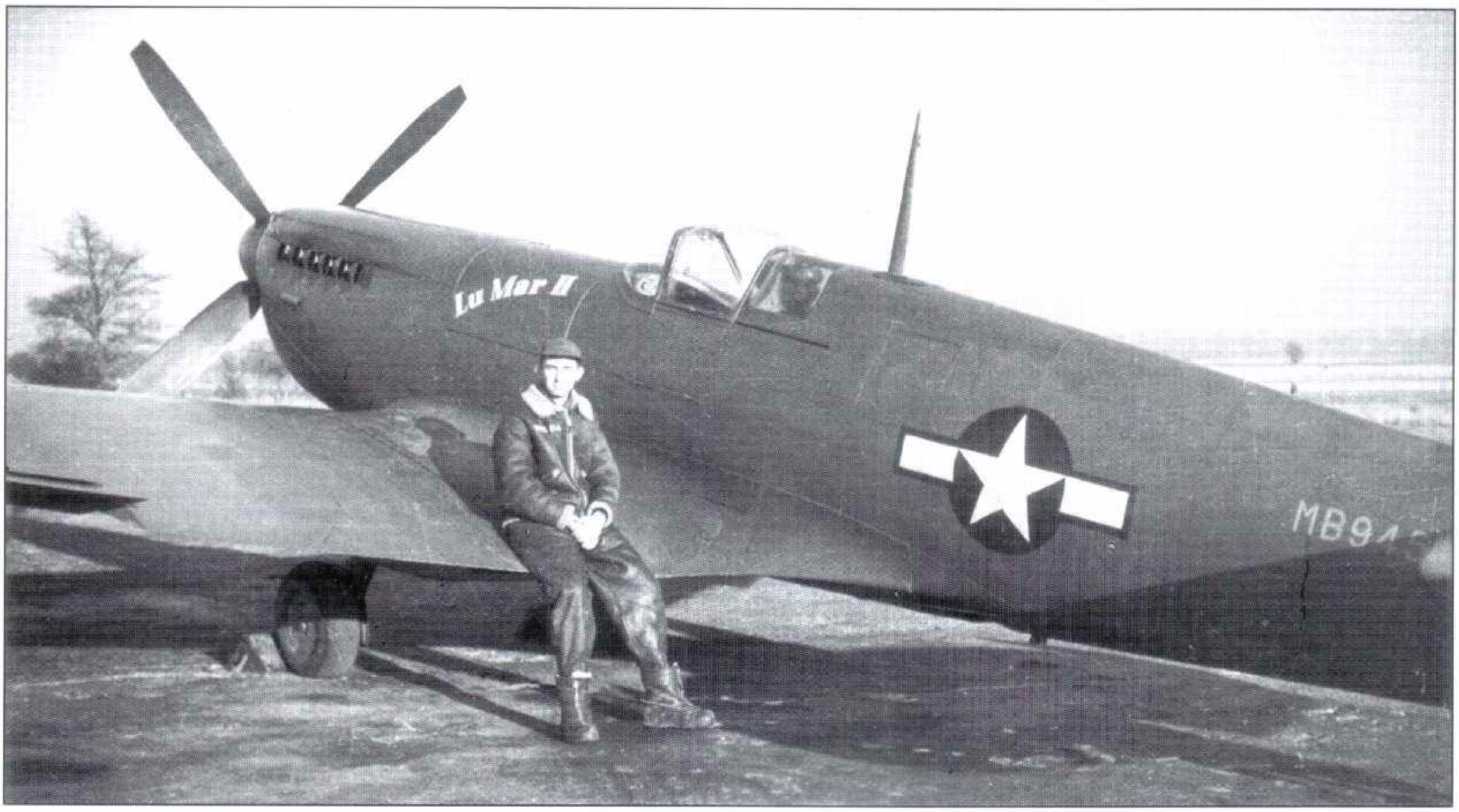
The 22nd PS

This Unit reached England in June 1943, and Captain George Lawson, the C.O., flew the squadron's first combat mission, in an F-5, on 24 June, 1943. One month later, the 7th PG was officially designated, with Lt. Colonel Hall, from the 13th PS, as the first Group C.O.

The 27th PS

The 27th PS, last to join the 7th PG, was organized in the U.S. in February 1943, with 1st Lieutenant Cecil Haugen as C.O. In November 1943, the squadron arrived at Mount Farm and Haugen, now a Captain, flew the Squadrons first operational sortie on 20 December, 1943.

Spitfire PR Mk XI MB945, 'Lu Mar II', of the 7th PG, in about December 1943. The fuselage cocardes scale out to 22" nominal diameter and MB945 has no large tail serial numbers. Note the winter clothing of the Crew Chief sitting on the wing and the new looking *PRU Blue* camouflage. (Russell)



The Lockheed P-38/F-5 Lightning suffered severe operational problems above 30,000 feet, where freezing temperatures affected engines and turbo-superchargers. Lack of adequate cockpit heating affected pilots and another problem was the early onset of compressibility during a high speed dive. In her excellent book "Eyes of the Eighth" Mrs Patricia Keen writes 'The F-5s were restricted to a 300-mile radius after mid-July, 1943.' The 7th PG was the only Lightning group in the ETO operating through most of 1943 and the problems were not corrected that year. Also, the shape of the twin-boom Lightning was so distinctive that Luftwaffe fighter pilots knew from a distance that their quarry was American and responded quickly to attack them.

Plans to bomb Berlin and invade Western Europe in 1944 required a far greater output from the 7th PG, from late 1943. Although the number of missions was increased and the ground crews worked night and day printing photos, repairing cameras etc., the 8th AF was not pleased with the 300-mile restriction or the high altitude limitations of the F-5s.

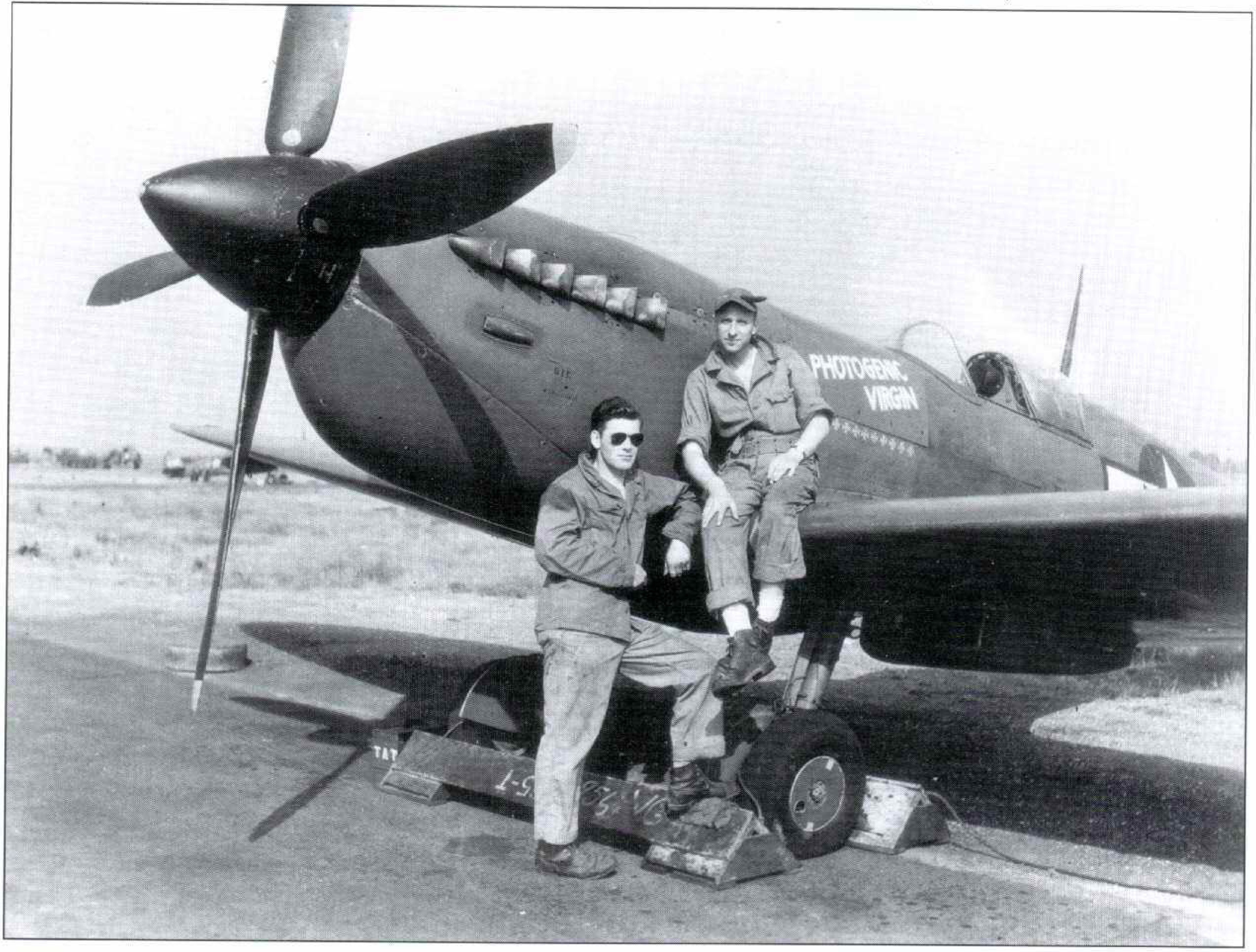
The 7th PG needed Spitfire PR Mk XIs.

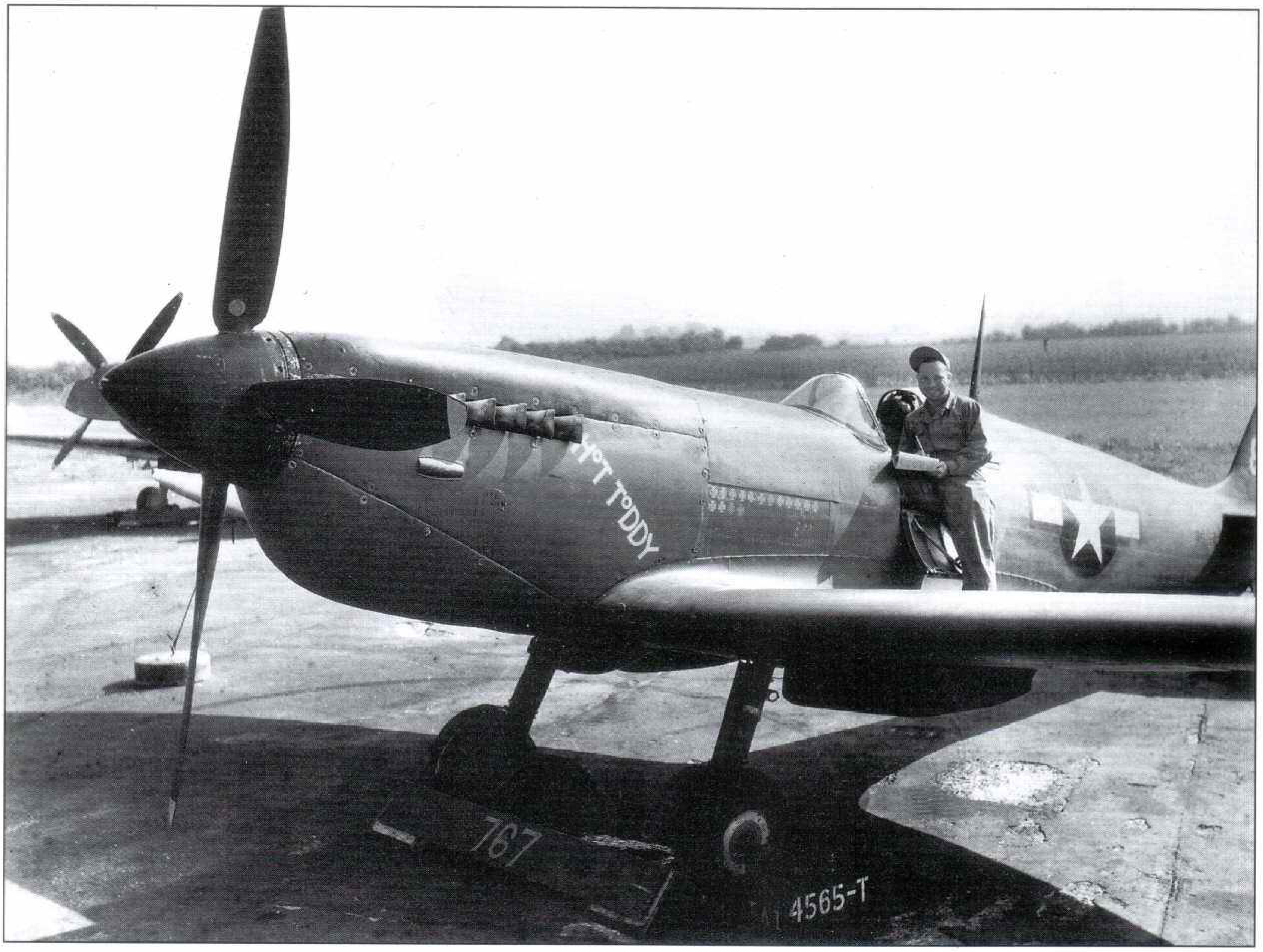
BLUEBIRDS FOR THE 7TH PG

Colonel Homer Sanders became C.O. of the 7th PG on 14 September 1943. Sanders was a decorated veteran fighter pilot from the Pacific Theatre, with two aerial victories. He replaced Colonel Hall, who became Chief of Reconnaissance for the whole USAAF.

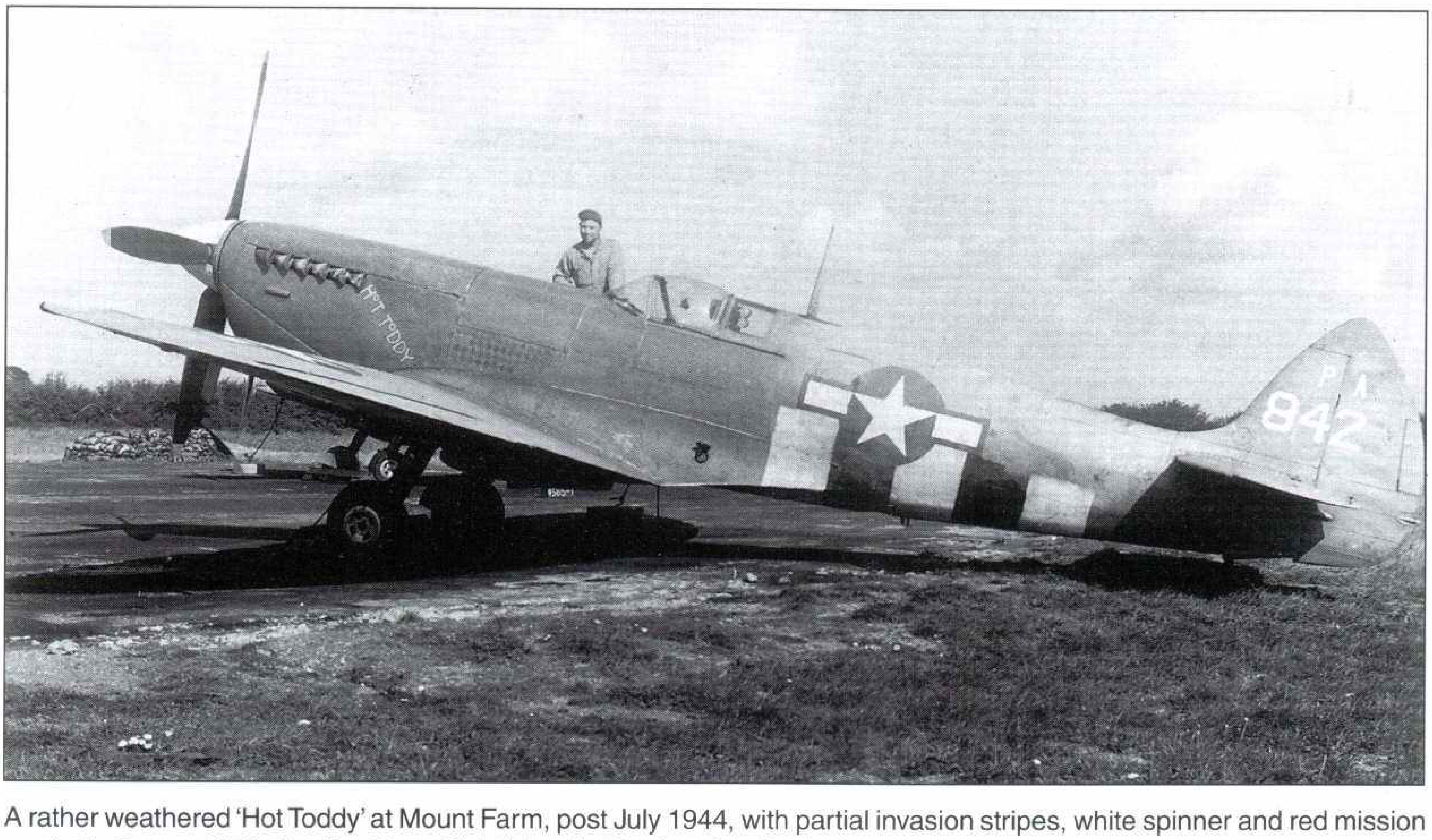
Soon after he became C.O. Sanders flew an F-5 Lightning in a mock dog-fight against a Spitfire Mk V. When trying to get on the

Sergeants Henry Navaroo, in dark glasses, and Franklin Stockes with Spitfire PR Mk XI 'Photogenic Virgin', March, 1944. The aircraft wears a relatively unweathered paint scheme and the black spinner standard at that time. (Russell)





'Hot Toddy' PA842, a PR Mk XI of the 14th PS, Mount Farm, Oxfordshire, about March 1944. The deep nose cowling containing the Mk XI's enlarged oil tank and the frameless windscreen are well illustrated. PA842 has 25" nominal diameter fuselage star-and-bars. Note the black spinner and white mission symbols. (Russell)



A rather weathered 'Hot Toddy' at Mount Farm, post July 1944, with partial invasion stripes, white spinner and red mission symbols. Sergeant Kinder, the Crew Chief, is with his aircraft in both photos on this page. (Russell)

PHOTOGENIC
VIRGIN

Spitfire PR Mk XI 'Photogenic Virgin' of the 14th PS, March 1945. Lieutenant Gerald Glaza sits in the cockpit. (Russell)

Spitfire's tail, one of his turbos exploded, sending metal flying through the F-5. The turbos of other Lightnings had exploded and Lockheed had installed a wedge of armour plate between the turbo and the cockpit, to protect the pilot. Colonel Sanders realised his Group needed a better PR type than the F-5 Lightning and fortunately had an advantage, in late 1943, when pressing his case for Spitfires. In those days the 7th PG was not subordinated to a Wing organization, so Sanders reported directly to Maj. General Ira Eaker, commander of the 8th AF. Over a poker game he asked Eaker for Spitfire Mk XIs, to which Eaker agreed, and in November the first Spitfire PR Mk XI was brought to the 7th PG.

Before Sanders could make a name for himself in Spitfires, he was appointed C.O. of the completely new 100th Fighter Wing of the 9th AF on 2 January, 1944. His replacement was Colonel Paul Cullen who took over on 1 January. One of his first decisions was to concentrate all the Spitfire PR XIs into the 14th PS, with its F-5s being passed to the other three squadrons. The 14th PS mechanics, having worked on the War Weary Spitfire Mk Vs, already had enough Spitfire experience to maintain the Mk XI. Major Wayne was transferred and Captain Walter Weitner was appointed C.O. of the 14th PS.

NATIONAL MARKINGS

The Spitfire PR Mk XIs delivered to the 7th PG were all in the RAF standard Photographic Reconnaissance scheme of *PRU Blue* overall and black spinner. The *PRU Blue* extended into wheel wells and covered undercarriage legs. Serial numbers were in 4" light grey characters on the rear fuselage. British national insignia consisting of 30" 'B' type fuselage roundels and 40" 'B' type upper wing roundels. New-build RAF PR Spitfires carried no underwing roundels.

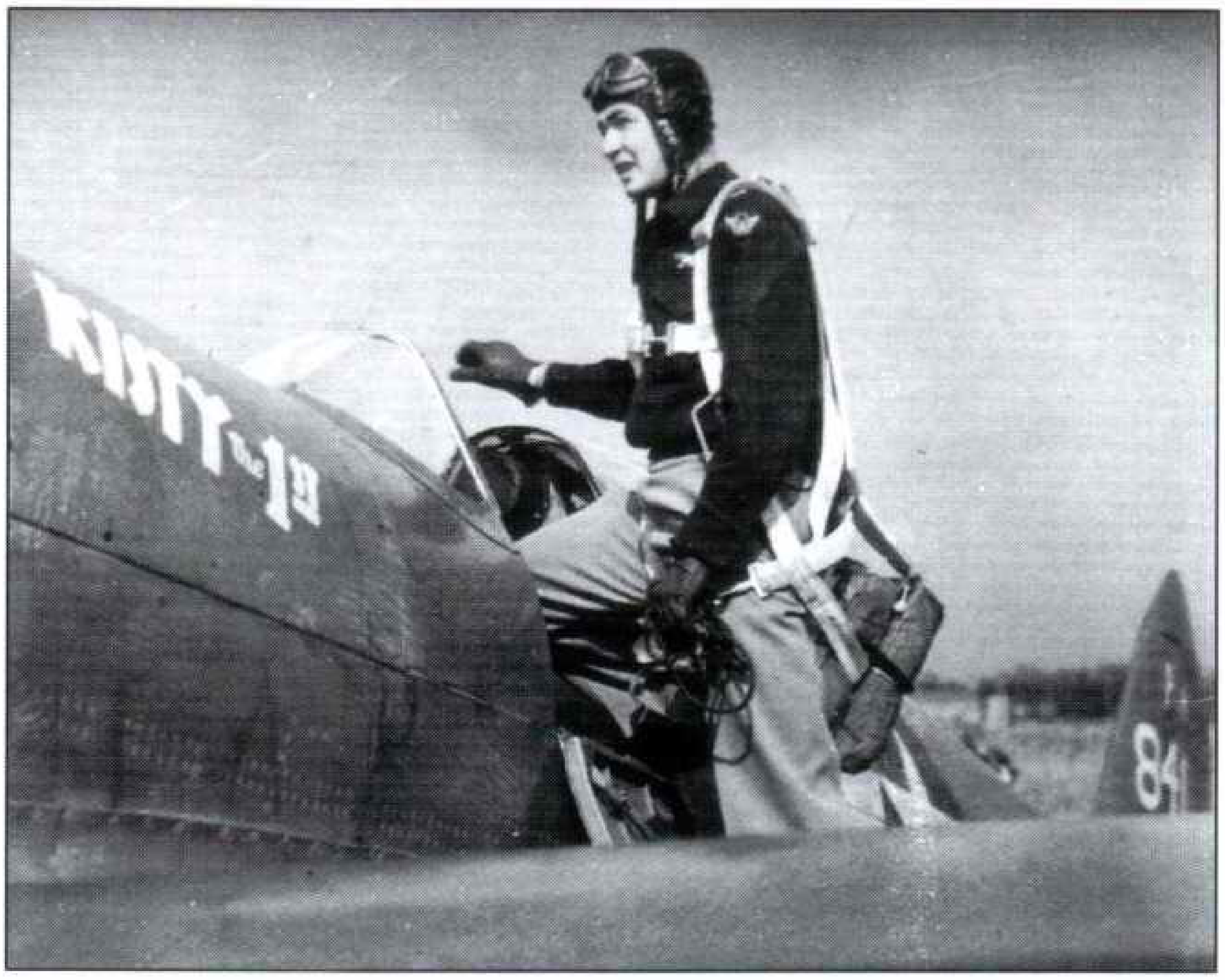
In USAAF service, replacing the RAF insignia entailed overpainting the fuselage roundels with anything from a 22" to 30" nominal diameter star-and-bars and the port upperwing roundel with a 40" nominal diameter star-and-bar. The starboard upperwing roundel was deleted and a 40" nominal diameter star-and-bar was added below the starboard wing.

Shortly after receiving the Mk XIs the 14th PS painted each aircraft's serial on the vertical tail surfaces with the two letters in 5-7" high and the three numbers below, in 10-12" white characters. Stencils do not appear to have been used for the job and so character styles varied between aircraft.

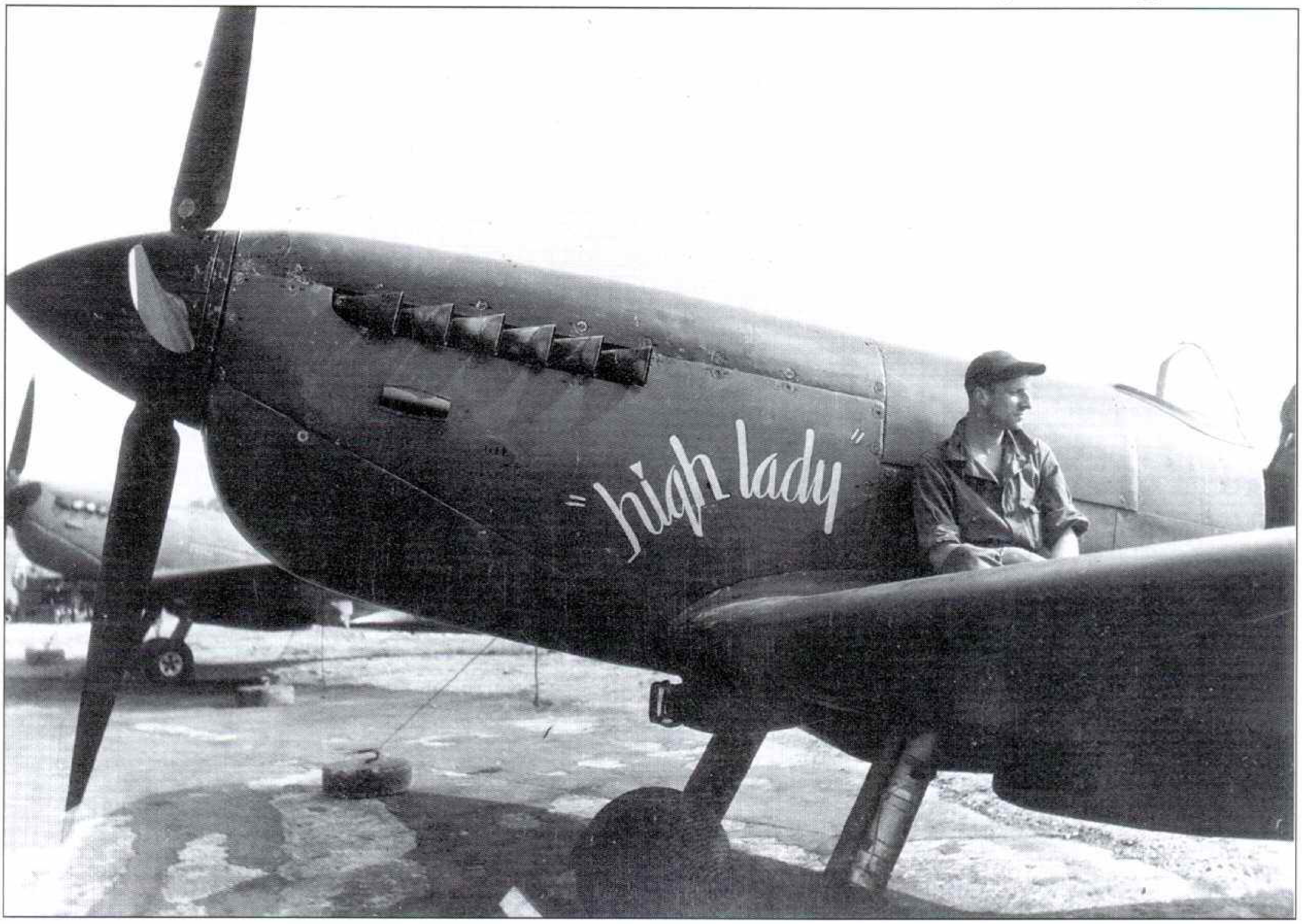
The Spitfire PR Mk XI had tremendous range. Early variants of Spitfire held 85 gallons of internal fuel while the Mk XI carried 218 gallons, with an enlarged oil tank under the nose to compliment the fuel load. Its range on internal fuel was an astounding 1,360 miles and with a drop tank a round trip to Berlin was just possible. It could cruise at 44,000 feet and achieve 422 mph at 27,500 feet and its Rolls Royce Merlin engine was generally more reliable than the F-5's Allison V-1710. Neither German anti-aircraft artillery nor Luftwaffe fighters could reach altitudes at which the Spitfire flew. From the very beginning, use of Spitfire PR Mk XIs dramatically changed the number and character of missions flown by the 7th PG.

The RAF never developed a long range fighter Spitfire although the PR Mk XI and the USAAF Range Extension Program proved it was possible (see American Spitfire Camouflage and Markings, Part 1).

The Lockheed F-5 was satisfactory below 30,000 feet, but some targets lay beyond the radius-of-action of an F-5. One way to get photos of distant targets was to fly shuttle missions, where after covering a target the pilot flew on to Italy. He would rest and return to England a day later, often taking more photos en route. Major Norris Hartwell flew the first shuttle mission, in an F-5 on 29 January, 1944.



Lieutenant Charles Parker climbs into 'Kisty the 1st', PA841. On summer days, some pilots flew in what they wore on the ground, with additional warm clothing. (C Parker)



Spitfire PR Mk XI PA892, "High Lady", was the aircraft flown by Major Walter Weitner, C.O. of the 14th PS, on the first USAAF PR mission to Berlin, in March 1944. "High Lady" had a black spinner and no 'Invasion stripes at that time. (Via P Ludwig)

STANDARDISED MARKINGS

By April 1944, the 14th PS Spitfires wore 25" or 30" nominal diameter fuselage markings and 40" nominal diameter insignia above the port and below the starboard wings.

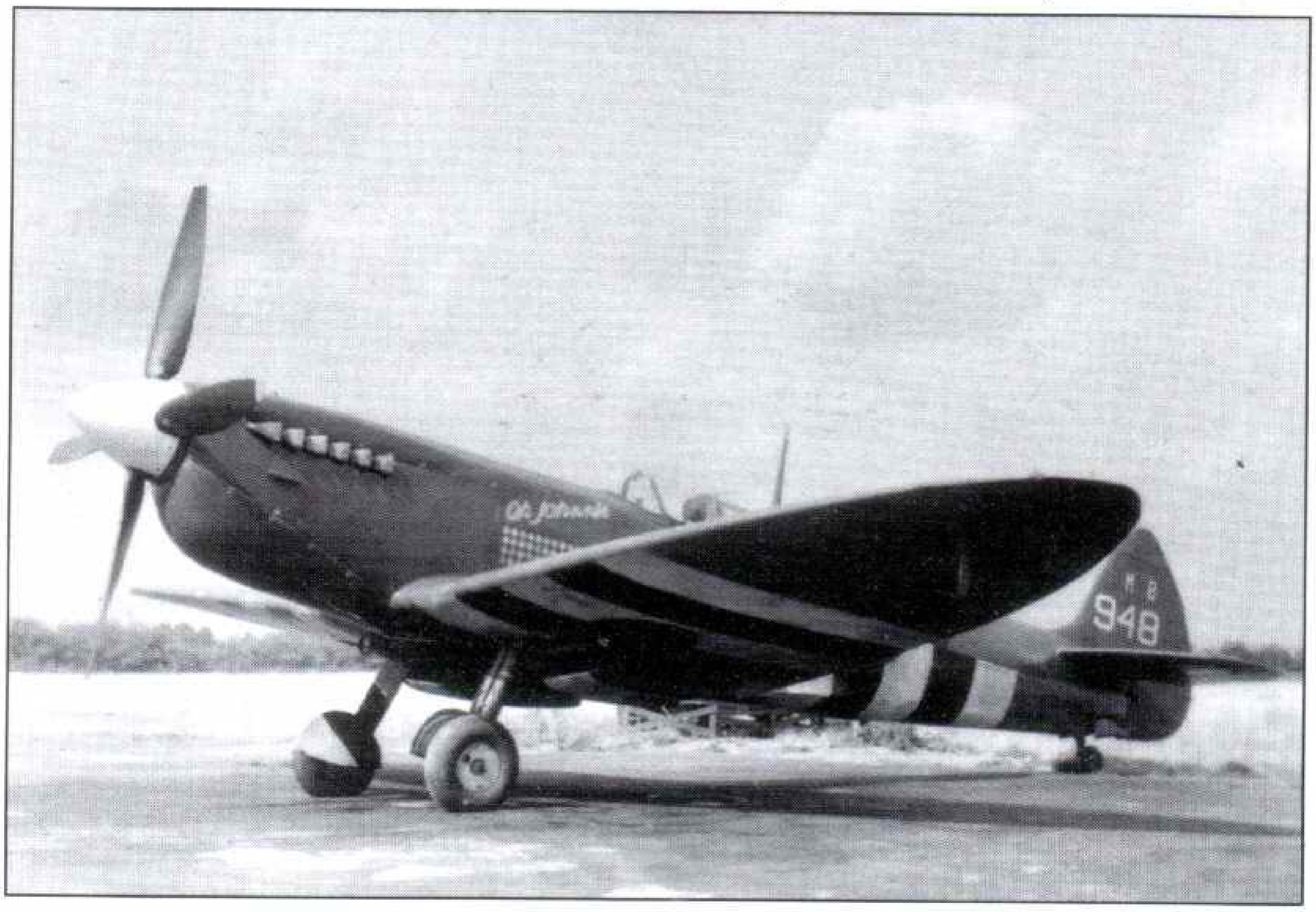
On 4 June, roughly-painted black and white invasion stripes were applied to all the Squadrons aircraft. When the wing and upper fuselage stripes were subsequently removed in August 1944, clear 'shadows' indicating their locations could be seen on the PRU Blue Spitfires. Also in August, the 14th PS spinners were repainted to flight colours of white or yellow – still with black backing plates.

With the end of hostilities in sight, in March 1945, the 7th PG removed camouflage from its aircraft, preferring the extra speed over concealment. The Groups Unit markings now consisted of a broad red cowling strip and an insignia blue spinner. An olive drab anti-glare panel was added and red, green, white or blue rudders were specified for the 13th, 14th, 22nd and 27th PS aircraft respectively. On the 14th PS Spitfires the large vertical tail surface serials were retained – in white on the green rudder and black on the bare-metal fin. Some sources report instances of yellow characters where the serial overlapped the rudder.

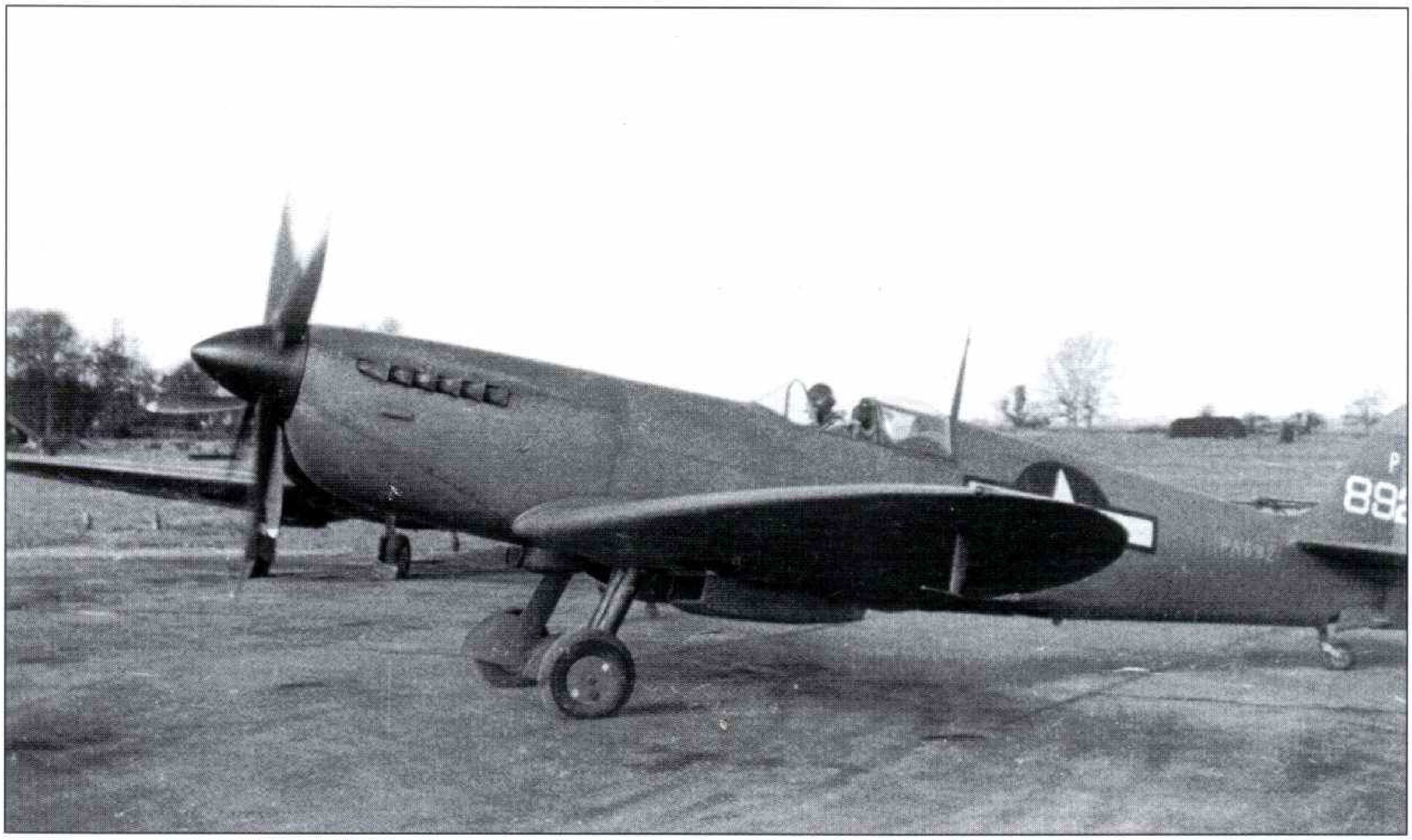
D-DAY

The tempo of aerial reconnaissance increased dramatically in early 1944 with the invasion of Europe imminent. Covering V-1 launch ramps and German defences were important, but photographing the coastline from Spain to Norway for D-Day was also necessary. To keep the Germans guessing as to where the invasion would be, the 7th PG flew more sorties to the Pas de Calais than to Normandy. Naturally, a PR mission was often followed the next day with a bombing raid and if follow-up photographic interpretation reported minimal damage, another raid ensued. Luftwaffe attempts to intercept PR types slowly achieved some success and, in February 1944, a pilot in the 27th PS was the first in the group to be attacked. Later in 1944, a special Luftwaffe high altitude interceptor unit was assigned the specialised task of destroying PR aircraft.

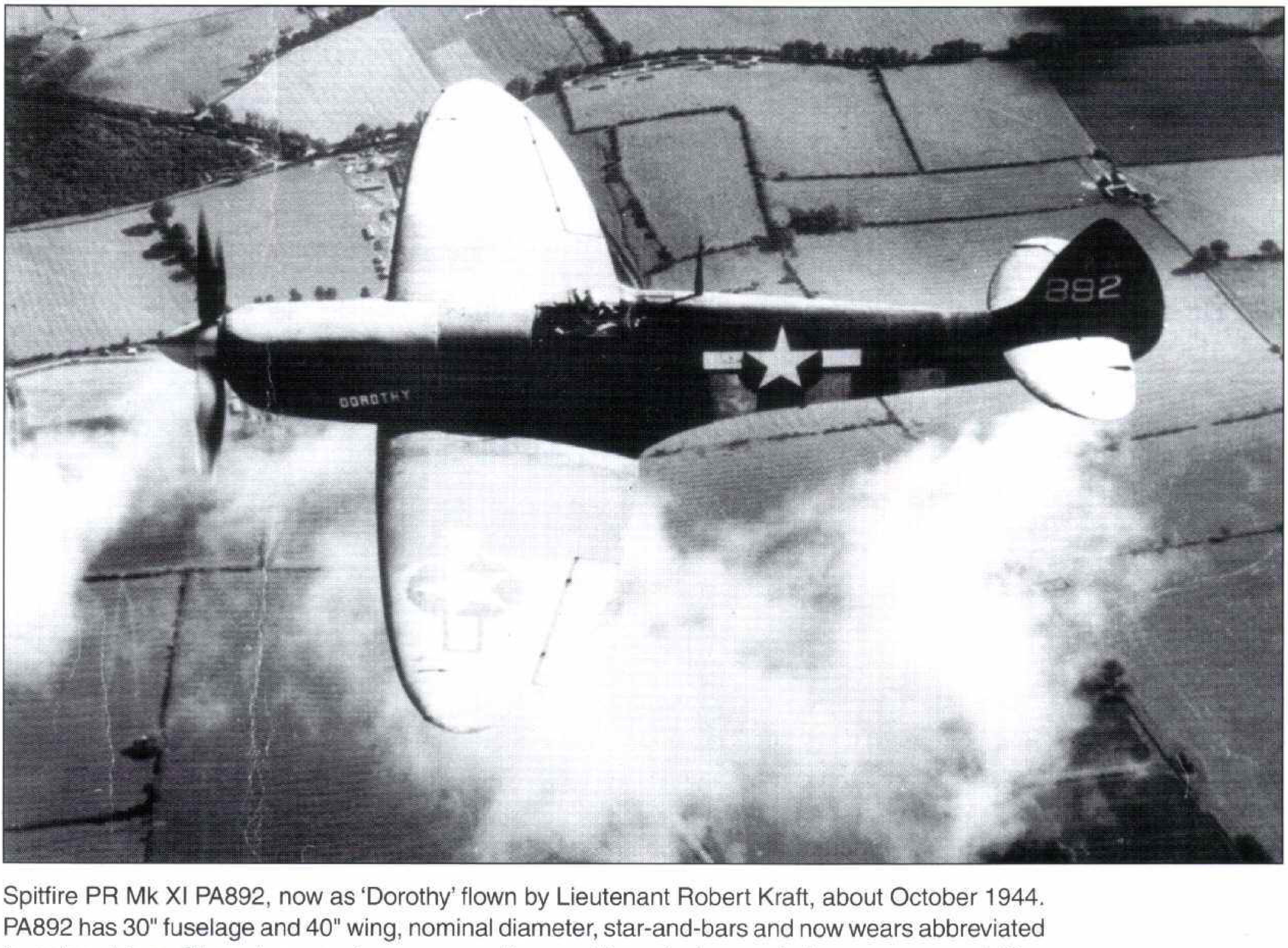
Perhaps the most famous USAAF Spitfire PR missions occurred after the 8th AF bombed Berlin for the first time on 6 March 1944. Captain Walter Weitner flew a sortie to assess bomb damage. Weitner's Spitfire "High Lady", PA892, took him to the German Capital and back. As he taxied in, the Merlin consumed the last of his fuel and died. Two days later, Lieutenant Charles Parker flew a second Spitfire to Berlin after USAAF bombers paid a second visit, but because he lingered over Berlin to get more photos, he ran low on fuel on the return journey and landed at RAF Bradwell Bay on the east coast. Both Weitner and Parker topped out at 41,000 feet to evade pursuers. The Spitfire PR Mk XI did not have a pressurized cockpit – today flight at that altitude



Spitfire PR Mk XI MB948 'Oh Johnnie' of the 14th PS, carried several rows of white mission symbols. Name is yellow and spinner is white. (Russell)



Above, PA892 of the 14th PS, before any personal markings were applied. Note the two white paint markers overlapping the tyre and wheel hub. These were to indicate whether the tyre had slipped around the wheel rim. (Russell)

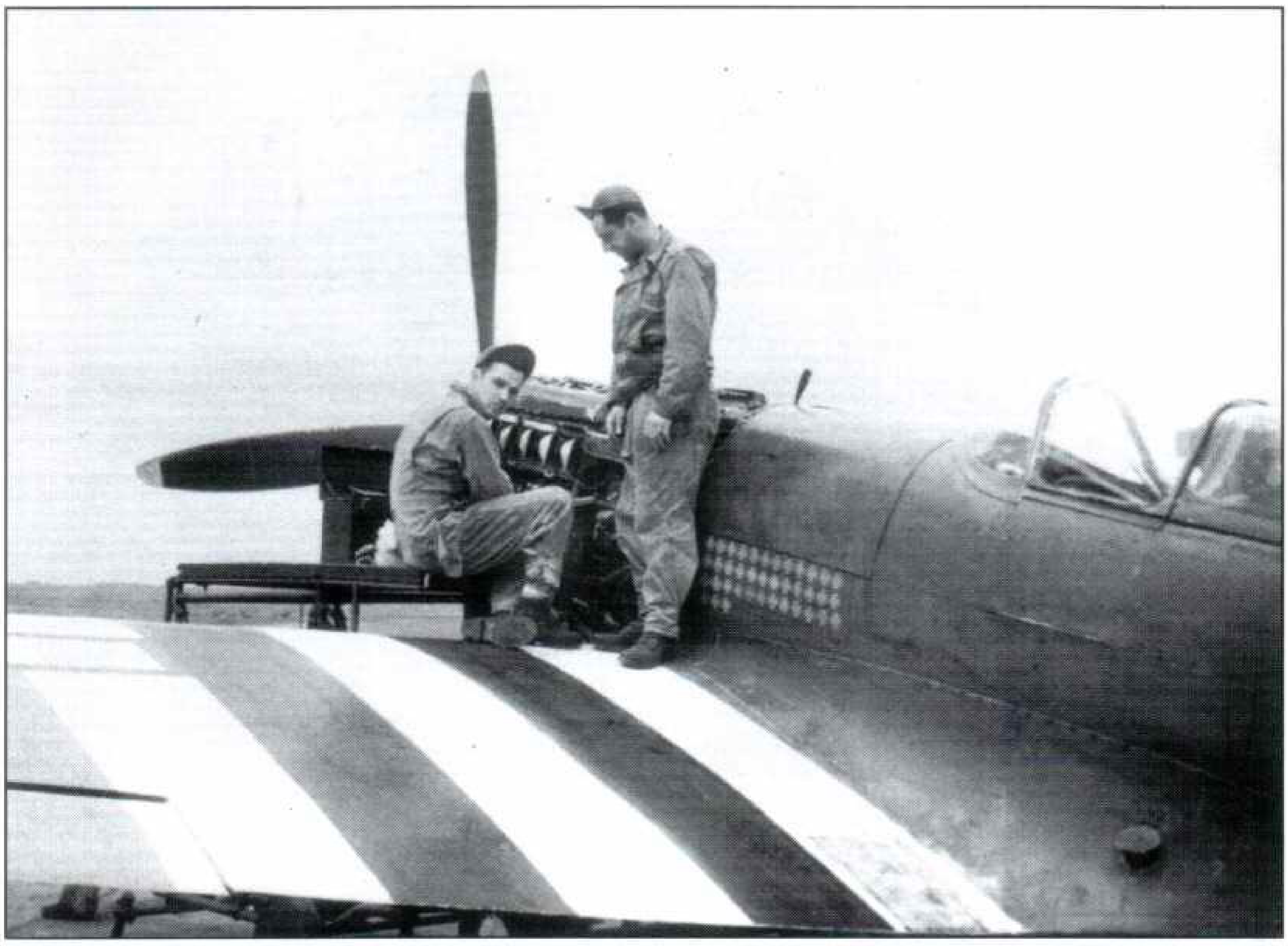


Spitfire PR Mk XI PA892, now as 'Dorothy' flown by Lieutenant Robert Kraft, about October 1944. PA892 has 30" fuselage and 40" wing, nominal diameter, star-and-bars and now wears abbreviated invasion stripes. The spinner and name are yellow and the mission symbol crosses are red. The dull, darker areas on the wings are where invasion stripes have been removed. (Bettin) without pressurization would be unthinkable.

President Franklin Roosevelt's four sons were all in uniform and one of them, Elliott, became associated with the 7th PG. General Eisenhower, commanding Operation Overlord, created the 8th RW (Reconnaissance Wing) (Provisional) in February 1944, and Colonel Elliott Roosevelt was appointed C.O. The 7th PG formed part of the 8th RW. Colonel Roosevelt had pioneered ferry routes for the USAAF and during the war, commanded the 3rd PG and then the Mediterranean Allied Photographic Reconnaissance Command. Creation of the 8th RW indicated the mushrooming need for PR as D-Day approached. The 8th RW was transferred from the 8th AF to the 9th AF and was renamed the 325th Wing in early March, with Colonel Roosevelt still in command.

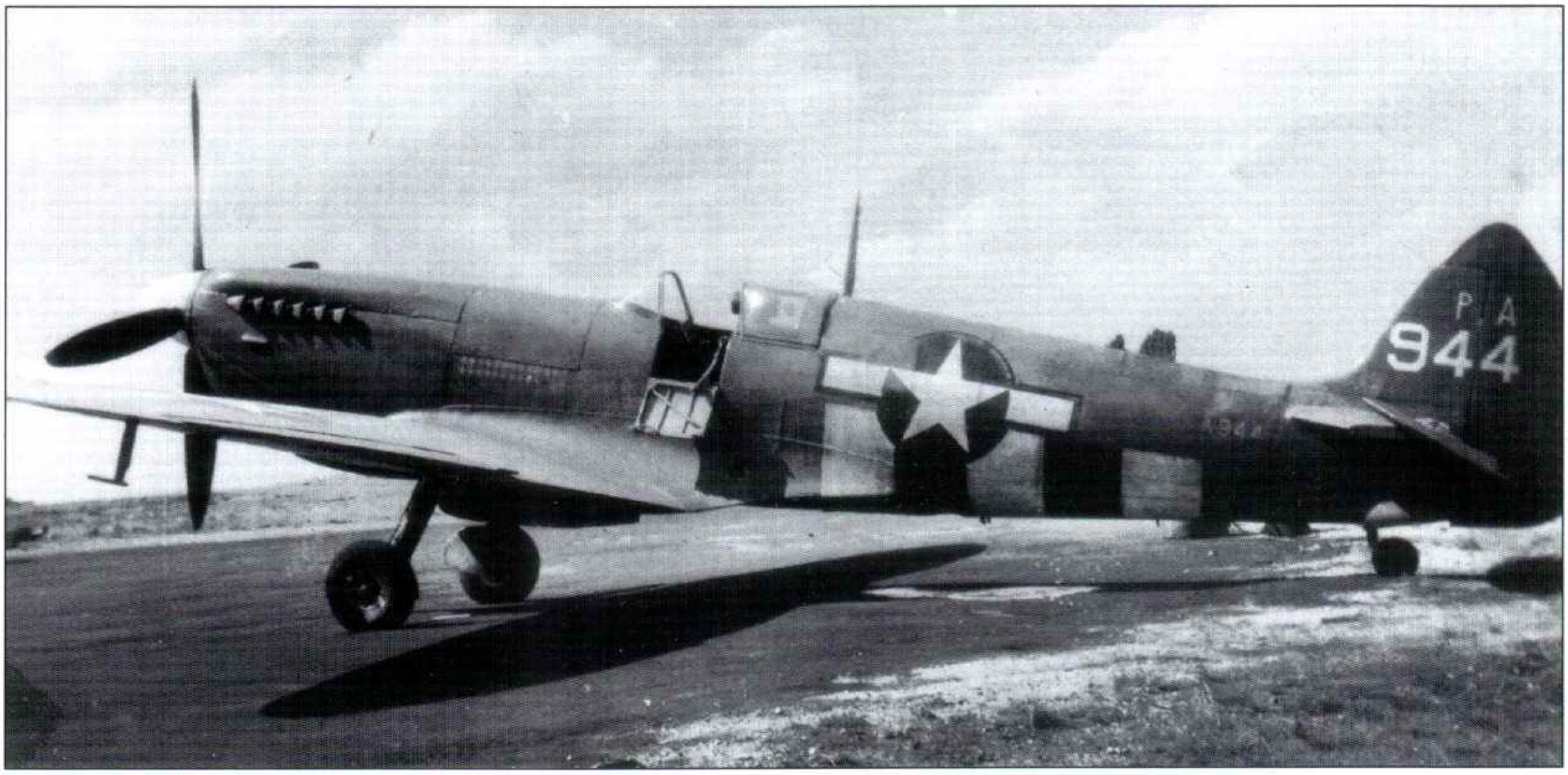
On 11 April 1944, Lieutenant Robert Dixon, flying a Spitfire PR XI, flew the thousandth sortie of the 7th PG. The majority of sorties were still flown in F-5s, although the Spitfire-equipped 14th PS flew just as many as each of the F-5 squadrons.

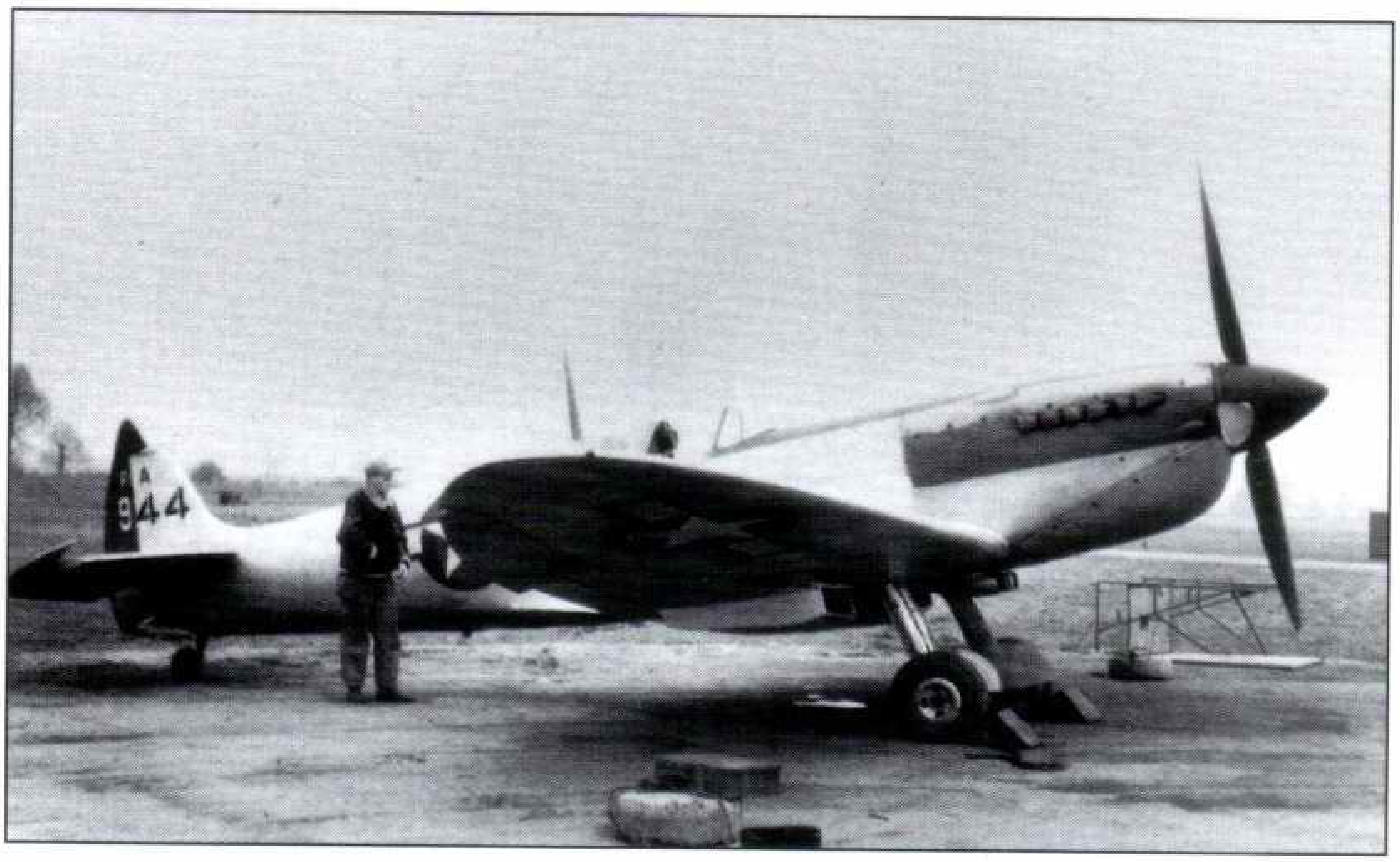
Major Norris Hartwell took command of the 7th PG from Lt. Colonel Lawson in May. Lieutenant Gerald Adams took his F-5 out on a mission in early August 1944, and became the first pilot in the Group to be intercepted by one of the Luftwaffe's new 'wonder weapons', the Me 163 Komet rocket fighter. Adams evaded being shot down by the 500 mph fighter. Lieutenant John Anderson flew the three-thousandth mission in an F-5 mid-August. After D-Day and when airfields were captured, the tactical 9th AF based groups on the continent.



Sergeants Kinder and Napalitano were performing maintenance on this Spitfire. Note the four rows of mission symbols, the wing invasion stripes and edge of a 40" nominal diameter wing star-and-bar. (Billyard)

About August 1944, Spitfire PR Mk XI PA944 wears a faded *PRU Blue* colour scheme and partly removed Invasion Stripes below the 30" nominal diameter fuselage star-and-bar. The residual 'shadow' indicating where the stripes have been removed from the upper fuselage is evident. (Lombard)



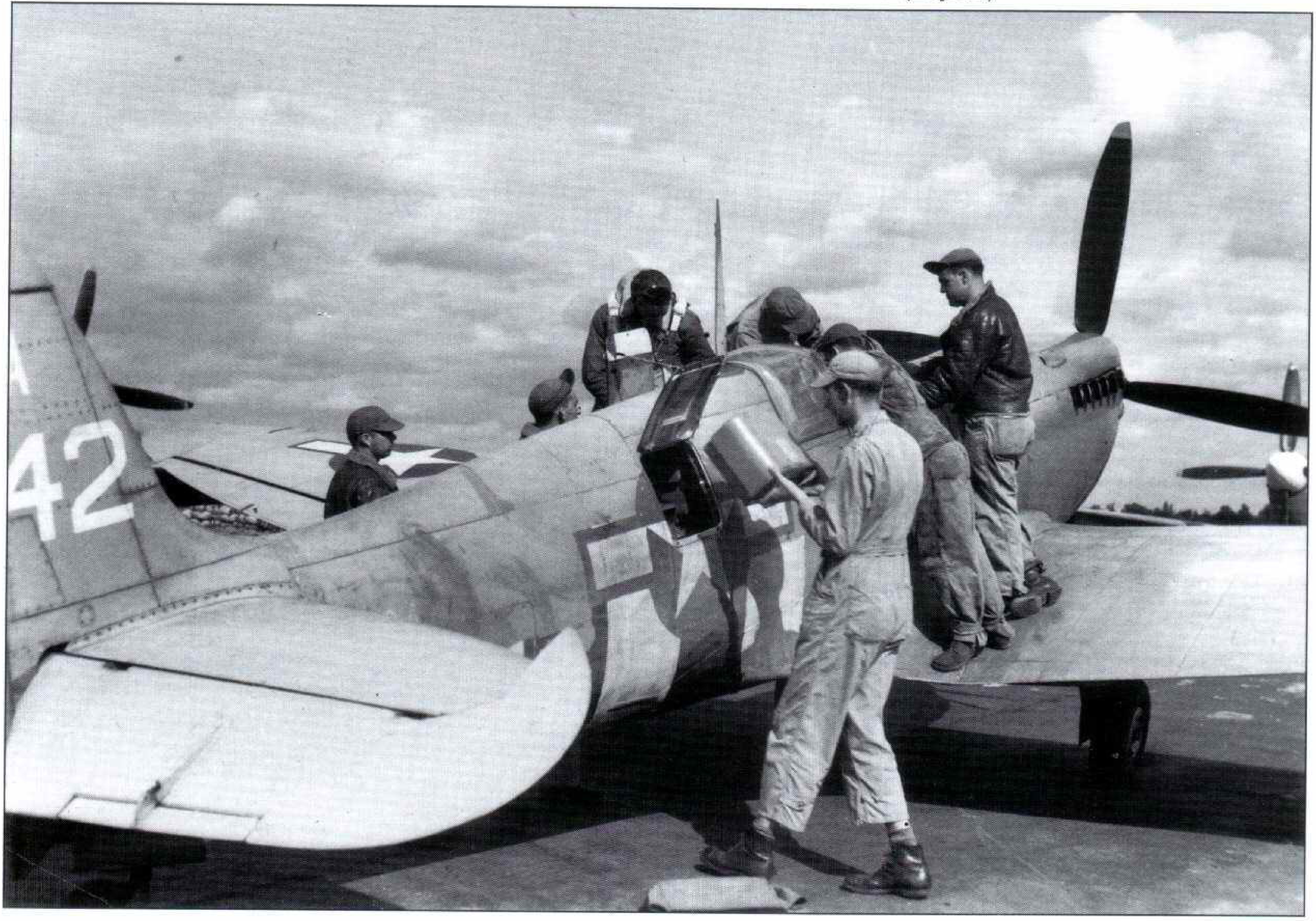


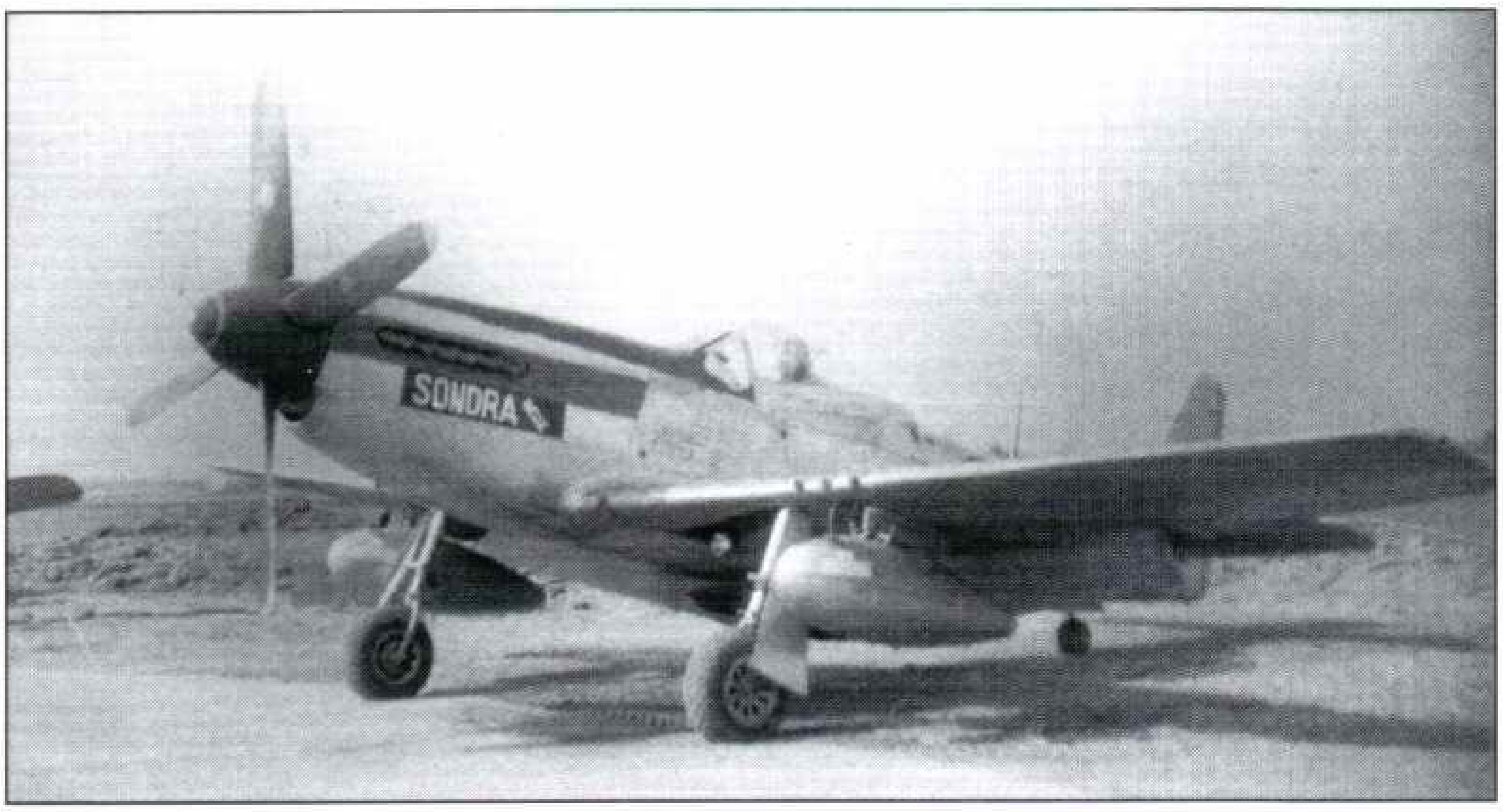
Spitfire PR Mk XI PA944, with a bare-metal finish, about April 1945. It has an insignia blue spinner and red stripe on the cowling (7th PG 'Group' markings) and the 14th PS colour of dark green on the rudder. (D Bilward)

Luftwaffe attacks upon unarmed Allied PR aircraft increased. The fastest aircraft in the world, an Me 262, shot up Lieutenant Ira Purdy's F-5 when he was flying from Denain/Prouvy to map Nurnburg on the day before Christmas. Purdy flew on one engine all the way back to his French base, crash-landed and survived, although his aircraft burned out. With the Me 262s on the scene, the 9th AF had no choice but to provide escorts for its PR aircraft and by 4 January 1945, fourteen P-51Ds were on strength. Lt. Colonel Humbrecht flew the first PR mission escorted by Mustangs, on 13 January 1945.

Captain Robert Dixon, then C.O. of the 14th PS (later a four-star General in the USAF), flew a mission on 14 February 1945, which added to his growing reputation. Flying a Spitfire Mk XI and escorted

Spitfire PR Mk XI PA942, photographed in the autumn of 1944, with its camera access doors open. Nearest the camera is Sergeant Shelton Gingerich, 'Shade' Kinder is to the left and Noble Neff is second from the left. The tail letters 'PA' scale out as 7" high and the numbers '942' as 12". Fuselage star-and-bar is 25" nominal diameter. Modellers should note the weathering and aging of the paint finish with darker areas along joint lines. (Bilyard)





A 7th PG P-51D Mustang escort fighter Note the *Insignia Blue* spinner, red cowl stripe and white rudder indicating that this machine was assigned to the 22nd PS. (Via P Ludwig)

by three Mustangs, he found his target, an oil refinery near Merseberg. But when he flew over it, poor visibility precluded a normal overhead photographic run. He knew a bombing mission was planned and if he didn't get the photos the mission would have to be cancelled. He left his escorts, descended below the cloud and into range of enemy anti-aircraft artillery and was shot down. Before Dixon bailed out, he radioed his escorts saying the plant's smokestacks were not emitting, therefore the plant was not operating and the bombing mission could be cancelled. Dixon spent the rest of the war as a P.O.W. and was awarded the DFC in absentia. Captain Gerald Adams became C.O. of the 14th PS.

The Group's four-thousandth sortie was flown in late February 1945 and with the war in Europe nearing an end, rumours circulated that some units would be sent to fight Japan. The USAAF policy was that in any American theatre of war, all equipment should be American made. Therefore the 14th PS would have to hand the Spitfires back to Britain. In March and April the squadrons moved to RAF Chalgrove and the war in Europe ended in May.

POST WAR MARKINGS

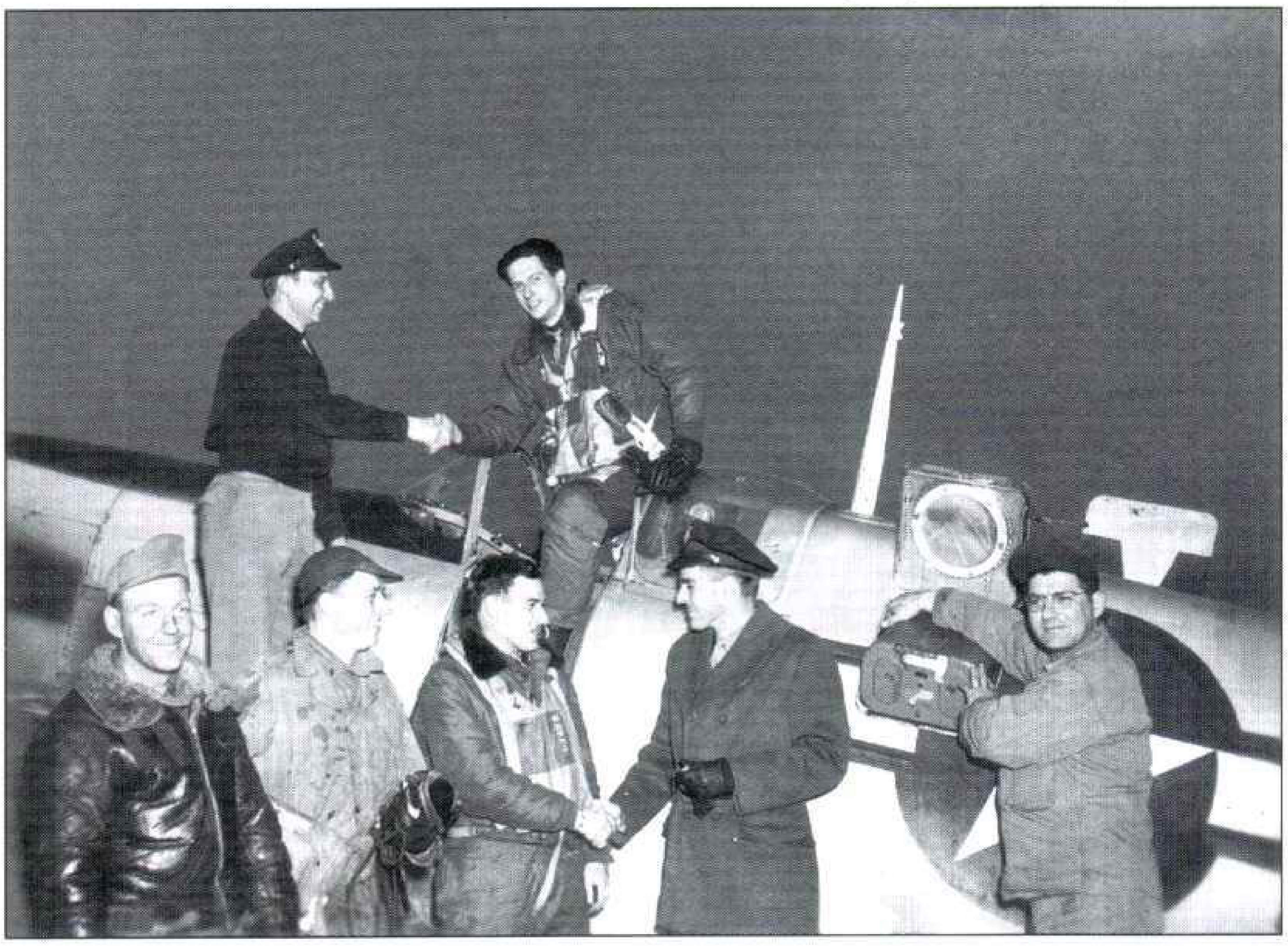
In the week after the cessation of hostilities Allied fighters were required to have large 'buzz numbers' painted under their wings. These were based on each aircraft's serial number. The idea being that, giving civilians a number to quote when complaining about low flying aircraft, would discourage pilots from the practice. The numbers were to be black on bare metal and light coloured surfaces; (eg. on day fighters) and white on darker surfaces.

Roger Freeman* reports, 'code letters were painted in white on the underside of the starboard wing of 7th PG Spitfires. The codes consisted of squadron letters plus the individual aircraft letter, but the former has never been positively identified'.

In her book "Eyes of the Eighth", Mrs Keen lists sixty-two men of the 7th PG who were casualties of war. Clearly, the valour of 7th PG pilots came at a high cost. No strategic reconnaissance crew is able to fight back when pursued by the enemy. Reconnaissance still requires long-range aircraft which have some method of evading interception; be it extreme altitude, superior speed or both and still requires men who are willing to fly unarmed and unafraid over enemy territory.

Completion of the 4,000th mission of the 7th PG was cause for celebration. From the left, Sergeant Nelson, Colonel George Humbrecht, C.O. of the 7th PG, an unidentified Sergeant, Lieutenant Robert E. Sanford, Lieutenant Jack H. Roberts, Major Gerald M. Adams, C.O. of the 14th PS and Sergeant Brown.

Note the bare-metal exterior of the aircraft and the anti-glare panel in front of the cockpit. (G M Adams)



---

* Camouflage and Markings – British Aircraft in American Service, by Roger Freeman.

Appendix 1 Camouflage colours and Federal Standard (FS) equivalents

USAAF 'ANA' (Army Navy Aircraft) Colours

Name	FS Equivalent
No. 45, Insignia Red (Bright)	31136, as recorded in red bordered national markings
No. 618, Insignia Red (Dull)	30109-30166, **not** recorded in use on 52nd FG Spitfires
No. 605, Insignia Blue	35044

RAF Colours

Name	FS Equivalent
Azure Blue	35231
Dark Green	34096
Dark Earth	30145-30188
Identification Blue (Dull)	35022-36076, no FS colour is a perfect match, 35022 is too blue
Identification Red (Dull)	30109-30166
Identification Yellow	33538
Light Mediterranean Blue	35177*
Medium Sea Grey	36314
Mid Stone	30266
Ocean Grey	36152
PRU Blue	35189-35164, 35189 is too light and 35164 too grey
Sky	34533-34504

Appendix 2 52nd FG pilots achieving four or more aerial victories flying Spitfires

Rank and Name	Unit	victories
1st Lieutenant Sylvan Feld	4th FS	9
Captain Norman L. McDonald	2nd FS	7.5, plus 4 in P-51 Mustangs for a total of 11.5
1st Lieutenant Victor N. Cabas	4th FS	5 in Spitfires, (1 of which was while with 403 Squadron RAF)
Captain Arnold E. Vinson	2nd FS	5
S/Sergeant James Edward Butler	2nd FS	5
1st Lieutenant John A. Carey	5th FS	4.5
1st Lieutenant Robert F. Armstrong	5th FS	4
1st Lieutenant Moss Fletcher	4th FS	4

Appendix 3 Selected Bibliography

Camouflage and Markings – British Aircraft in American Service. By Roger Freeman, Ducimus Books, England

Eyes of the Eighth – A Story of The 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group 1942 – 1945. By Patricia Fussell Keen, CAVU Publishers, L.L.C., 16810 Boswell Blvd. Sun City, Arizona 85351-1270, USA.

IPMS Color Cross-Reference Guide. By David H. Klaus, 3404 Ramsgate Terrace, Alexandria, VA 22309-2142, USA.

Spitfire the History. By Eric B Morgan and Edward Shacklady, Key Publishing, England

Spitfire – The Story of a Famous Fighter. By Bruce Robertson, Harleyford Publications, England.

US Air Force Colors 1942-1945 European and Mediterranean Theatres of War. By Dana Bell, Arms and Armour Press, England. Also published by Squadron Signal in the USA.

---

* Quoted from IPMS Color Cross-Reference Guide, by David H. Klaus

Appendix 4 The principal colour schemes for Spitfires in the Mediterranean

Official RAF documents used the word 'camouflage' strictly in reference to upper surfaces. Descriptions of colour schemes always includes 'Upper surfaces camouflage' and a separate entry for 'Under surfaces colouring'. All the standard schemes: Temperate Land, Day Fighter, Desert, Day Fighter (High Altitude), refer to aircraft upper surfaces.

TEMPERATE LAND SCHEME - *Dark Green* and *Dark Earth*

Introduced before the war and used on Spitfires in:

- Britain until August 1941 with Sky undersurfaces,
- Malta, Sicily, Italy until 1944, with *Sky*, *Azure Blue* or *Light Mediterranean Blue* undersurfaces,
- the Far East, with *Sky* undersurfaces, until after the war.

It is frequently ignored that this scheme was widely used in Malta (there are colour photos of AVM Park, AOC Malta, in early 1943, taking off in his personal Spitfire Mk V, clearly finished in this scheme). Once Axis forces were defeated in Africa many Allied air units (including USAAF squadrons) moved to airfields on the island. A natural aircraft rotation occurred during this respite period, as worn machines were overhauled and repaired, going to and from Maintenance Units. This is one route by which some Temperate Land Scheme Spitfires may have been assigned to USAAF units.

DAY FIGHTER SCHEME - *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey*

Introduced in August 1941, with *Medium Sea Grey* undersurfaces only, and used on Spitfires until after the war in:

- RAF Fighter Command from August 1941,
- the Mediterranean from 1943 (perhaps in Malta from 1942),
- the Far East from 1944.

It was standard to add the *Sky* fuselage band and spinner to this scheme at the factory. Therefore, in the MTO (Mediterranean Theatre of Operations) the spinner would be overpainted (usually in white or red), as would the *Sky* band (usually with one of the camouflage colours). In rare cases, the band and/or spinner, would be left *Sky*.

DESERT SCHEME - *Dark Earth* and *Middle Stone*

Introduced in 1940 and, until mid-1942, used in conjunction with *Sky* undersurfaces only. In mid-1942 *Azure Blue* was introduced as an alternative colour for undersurfaces. From the beginning of 1943 *Light Mediterranean Blue* was authorised as an alternative to both, with all three remaining officially sanctioned. The Desert scheme was used on Spitfires in:

- North Africa,
- Malta (briefly),
- x Sicily and Italy.

Between July 1941 and 1942 this scheme was erroneously defined as 'dark green and mid-stone' in some official documents; but this did not affect the 31st or 52nd FGs as the error was corrected several months before the first USAAF Spitfires reached the Mediterranean.

When the 52nd FG was posted to North Africa it collected Spitfire Mk V (trop) aircraft in Gibraltar before moving on to participate in Operation Torch. These Spitfires were in the standard RAF Desert scheme of *Dark Earth* and *Mid-Stone* uppersurfaces with *Azure Blue* undersurfaces. On the production lines in England the *Dark Earth* replaced *Ocean Grey* and the *Mid Stone* replaced the *Dark Green* (figure 2). From black and white photographs the two different colour schemes are easily discerned, because the *Ocean Grey* is the lighter uppersurface colour in the Day Fighter scheme, while the *Dark Earth* (which replaces it in the Desert scheme) is the darker of the two uppersurface colours in that scheme.

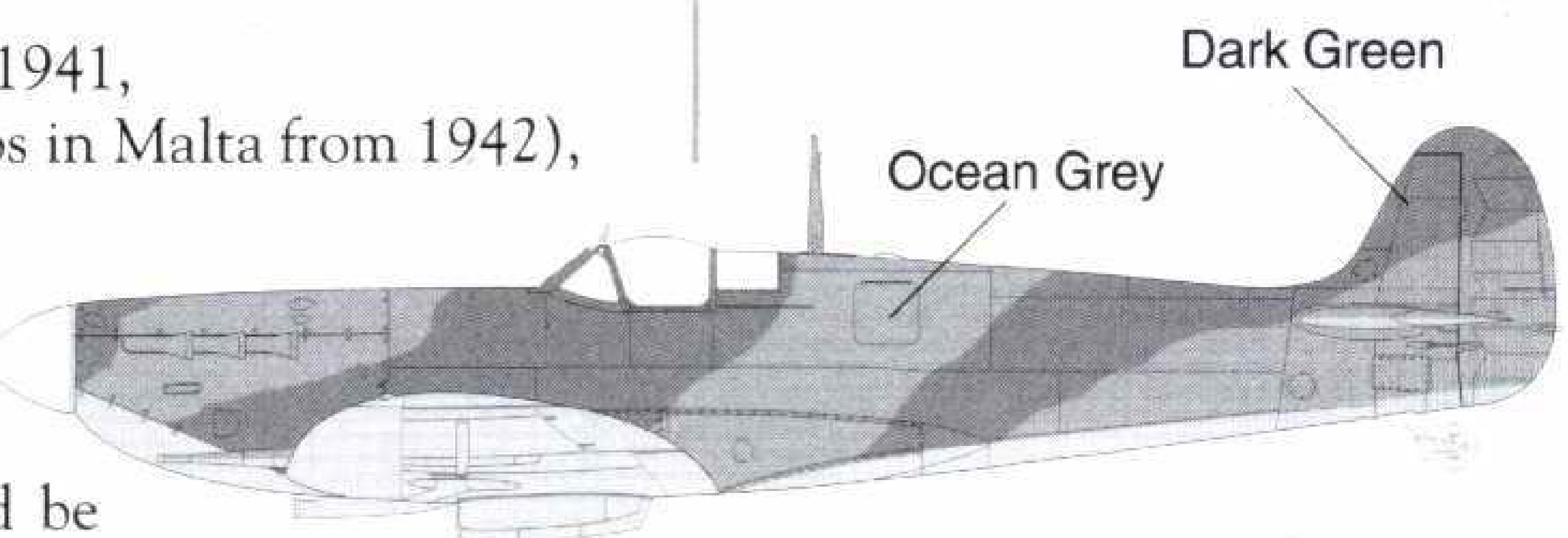


Figure 1. Port side of a Spitfire Mk Vb in the *Dark Green* and *Ocean Grey* Day Fighter Scheme with *Medium Sea Grey* undersurfaces.

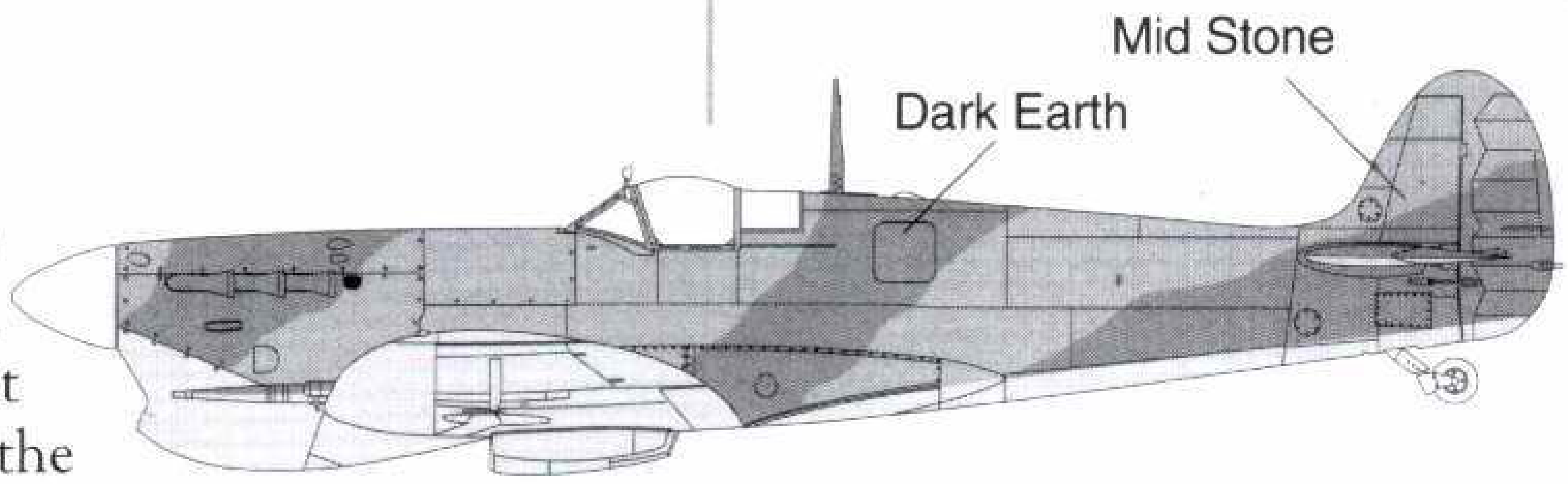


Figure 2. Port side of a Spitfire Mk Vc (trop) in the *Dark Earth and Mid Stone* Desert Scheme with *Azure Blue* undersurfaces.

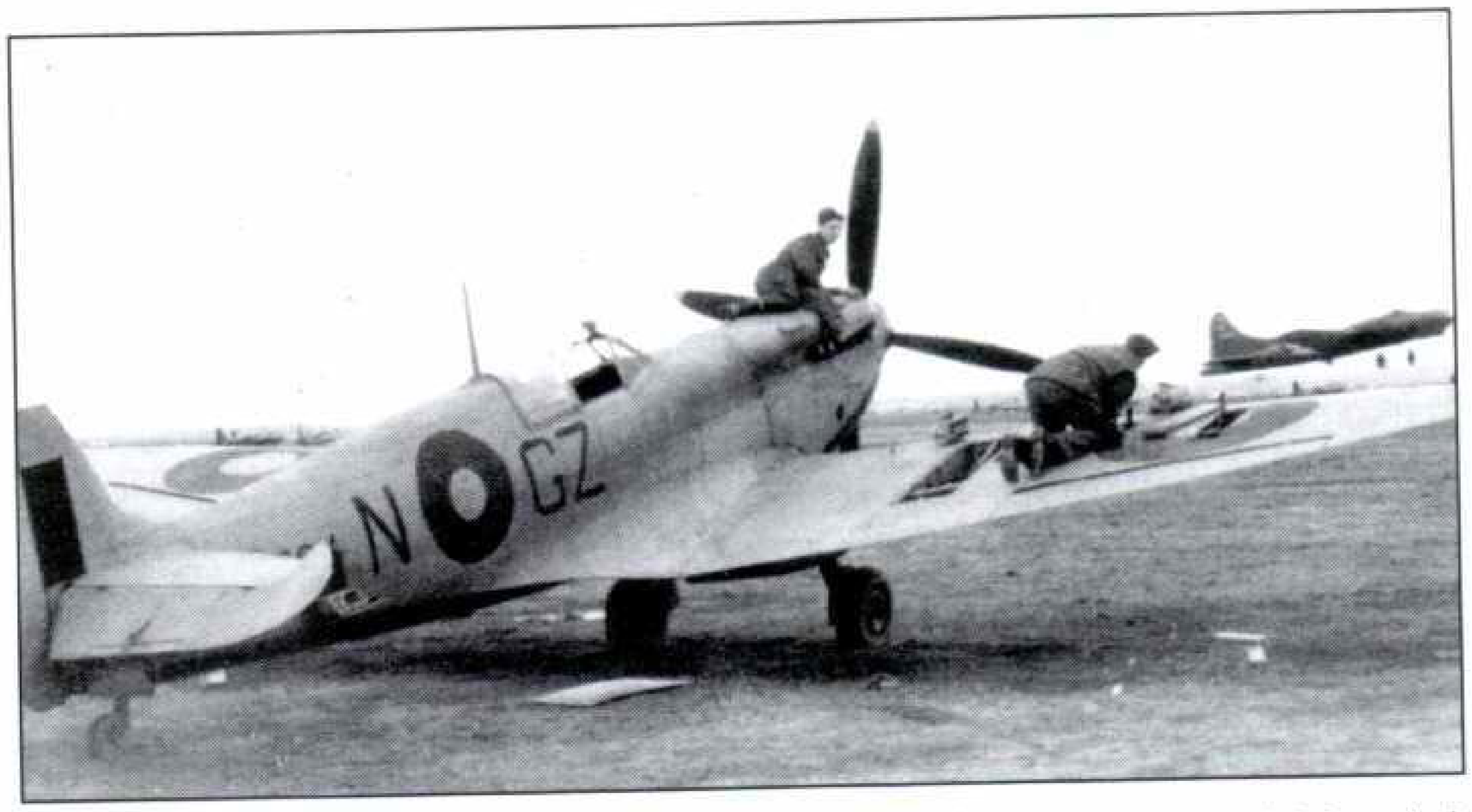
DAY FIGHTER (HIGH ALTITUDE) SCHEME - *Medium Sea Grey* on all uppersurfaces

Introduced officially in June 1943, always with *PRU Blue* on undersurfaces.

An official document of December 1942 mentioned under the heading "High altitude fighters" that "...pending the adoption of a standard scheme [...] various camouflages, colourings and markings [are] used...", so some sort of preliminary scheme of this kind must have been in testing by the end of 1942, but it is doubtful that any Spitfire Mk VII in this scheme reached the MTO. For Spitfires the scheme was used on:

- Mk VIIs in Britain,
- some Mk VIIIs and Mk IXs in the Mediterranean. Especially those used as high-altitude interceptors, rather than the escort/ground-attack role assigned to most Spitfires in the MTO.

Most photos of so camouflaged Spitfires of RAF units in the MTO show single grey aircraft among line-ups of two-tone camouflaged ones, indicating there was just one or two grey aircraft in each squadron.



A Day Fighter (High Altitude) camouflaged Spitfire Mk VIII (probably JF364) of 32 Sqn RAF in Italy or Yugoslavia, 1944. (W Matusiak)

'BROWN' COLOUR SCHEMES

There was never an official single-tone brown scheme on uppersurfaces. However, none of the early Mk IXs sent to North Africa were factory finished in the Desert scheme - they were all repainted in the field. And it is noteworthy that most, if not all, of the mysterious single-light-colour schemes are seen on Mark IXs. According to personal accounts, the first Mk IX (EN186) in 145 Sqn RAF, then in Tunisia, was known as the 'Bluebird' due to its colouring; although nobody remembers the actual scheme. In black and white photos it seems to be in standard two-tone camouflage, but the actual shades are unknown. There are well known photos of EN315 'ZX-6' of the Polish Wing 'Skalski's Circus' apparently with a single tone on uppersurfaces. In the background of the same photos there are several Spitfires clearly in two-tone camouflage.

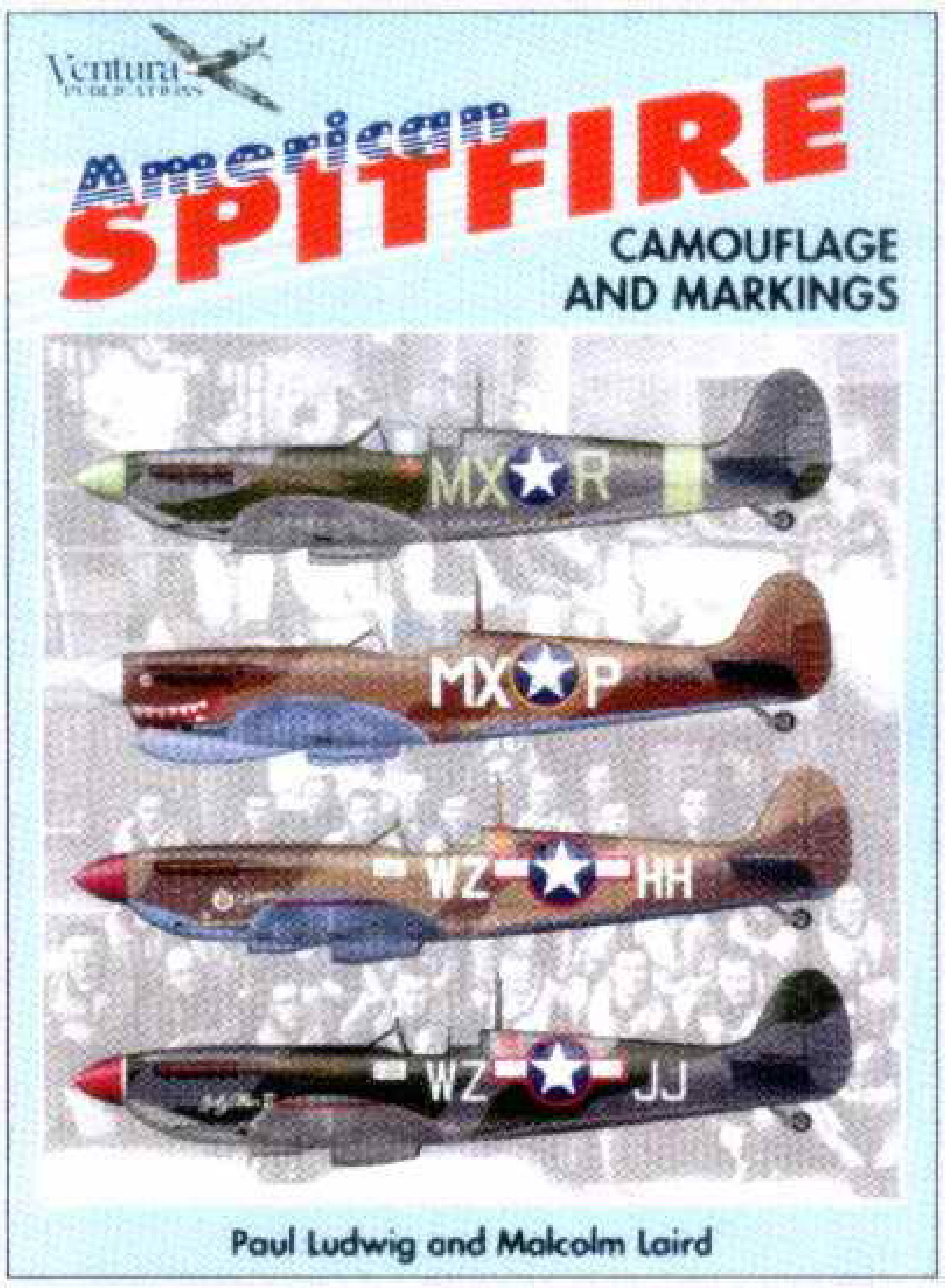
As the 52nd FG advanced into Sicily and Italy it experimented with a number of colour schemes aimed at concealment in the more temperate Italian climate. By the time the Group relinquished its Spitfires in April 1944, some of the their Spitfire Mk IXs were in light to mid brown uppersurfaces. Some Mk Vs were in an uppersurface scheme of dark green and grey, brown or *Olive Drab*.

Some authors report the use of pink as a high-altitude fighter colour scheme. In the absence of photographic proof, our opinion is that pink was only used on low-level photo reconnaissance RAF Spitfires (generally Mk IXs), as it concealed well against low cloud, especially early in the morning. All known high altitude schemes for either fighters or PR aircraft were in blue and/or grey tones.

Already published in the Classic Warbird series,

NOW AVAILABLE FROM YOUR BOOK SELLER, OR DIRECT FROM THE PUBLISHERS...

AMERICAN SPITFIRE - CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKINGS, Part 1


Ventura Publications
American SPITFIRE
CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKINGS
MX R
MX P
WZ HH
WZ JJ
Paul Ludwig and Malcolm Laird

The first part of 'American Spitfire Camouflage and Markings', covers the Fighter Airplane Range Extension Program, the 31st Fighter Group, the 496th Fighter Training Group and the US Navy Spitfires of VCS - 7, who flew as artillery spotters over the Normandy beaches. Generally, USAAF Spitfires wore RAF camouflage and USAAF markings. Cocarde and code letter size, style and placement varied greatly, because markings were applied at unit level and new aircraft were always received still wearing RAF markings. Variations were many, including field repainted aircraft and the various Spitfire 'hacks' retained by squadrons after the transition to Mustangs.
Includes; 34 colour illustrations, 9 colour and 97 B/W photos.

ISBN O-9583594-3-1

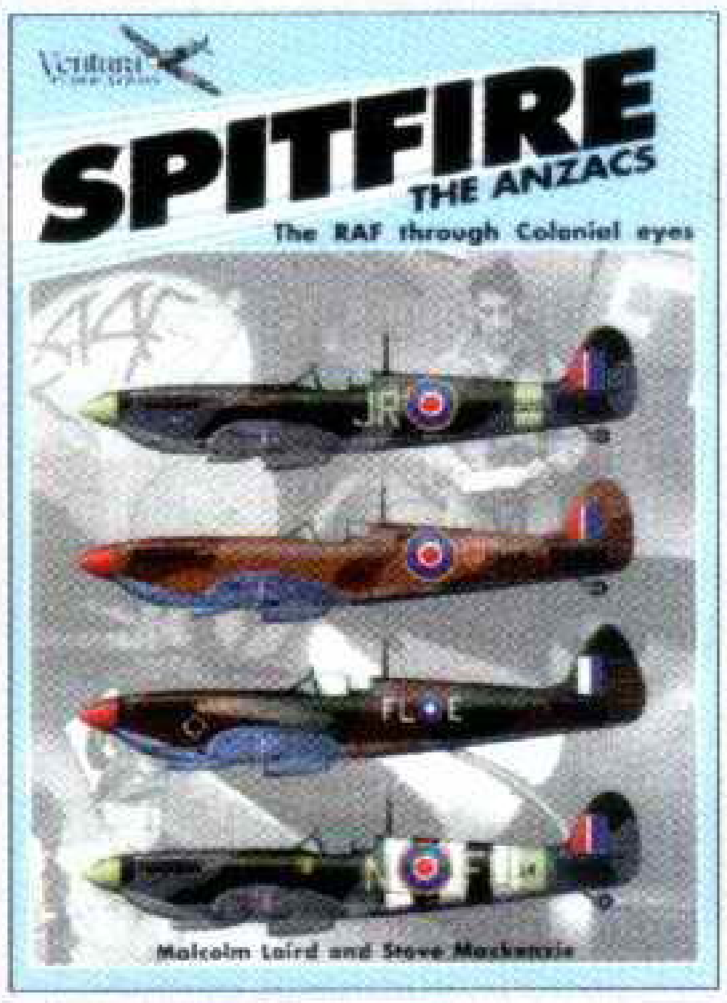
SPITFIRE - STAR OF ISRAEL

Ventura Publications
SPITFIRE
Star of Israel
Alex Yofe

The story of Israel's first Spitfires, some rebuilt from RAF wrecks and others flown to Israel from Czechoslovakia, in 1948. The book includes 21 new colour illustrations, scale drawings of the Israeli Spitfire Mk IX, and 85 photographs, most previously unpublished.

ISBN O-9583594-0-7

SPITFIRE - THE ANZACs


Ventura Publications
SPITFIRE
THE ANZACS
The RAF through Colonial eyes
Malcolm Laird and Steve Mackenzie

A resource for modellers and aviation enthusiasts interested in the RAF in World war II. It details the careers and aircraft flown by seven RAAF and RNZAF airmen and includes colour illustrations and scale drawings of the Spitfire Mk Vc (trop), specially commissioned for the book, and 73 photographs.

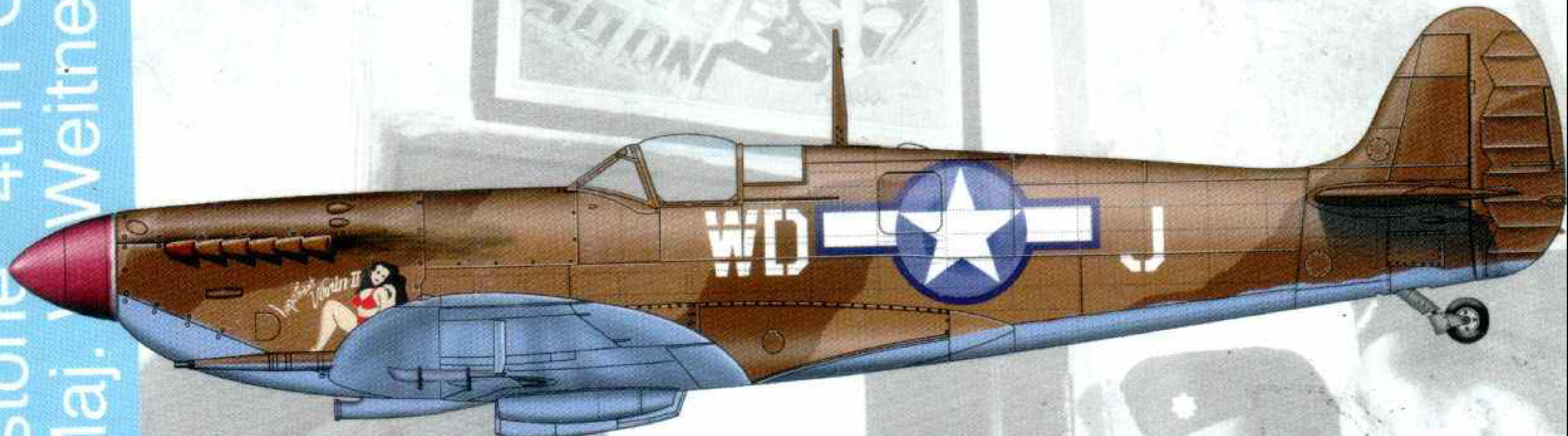
ISBN O-9583594-1-5

Maj. R Levine La Sebala Mount Farm "High Lady" High Altitude Scheme

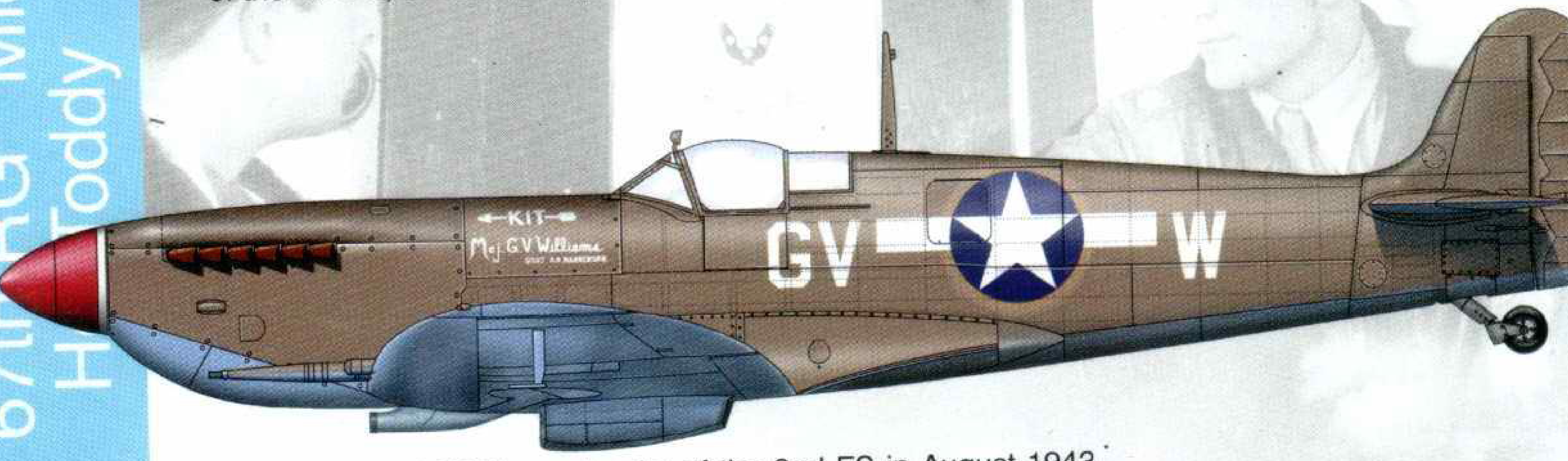
Mid-stone Azure Blue 4th FS PRU Blue Biggin Hill Spitfire PR Mk XI

52nd FG t. Sylvan ld Photogenic Virgin 67th RG Mid-stone 4th FG

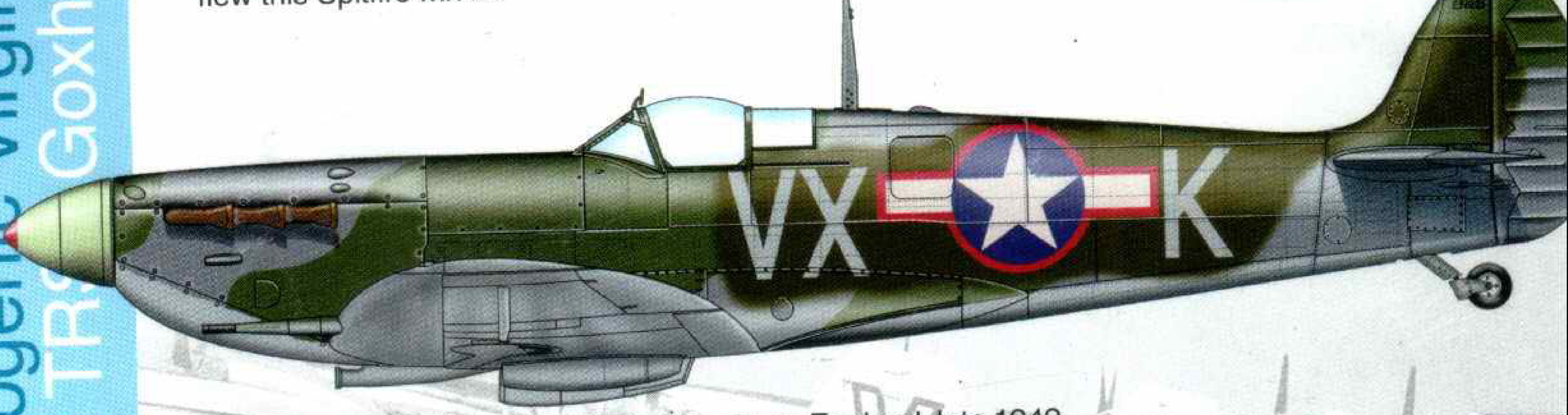
Invasion Al 107th TR Goxhill H Toddy Maj. Weitner



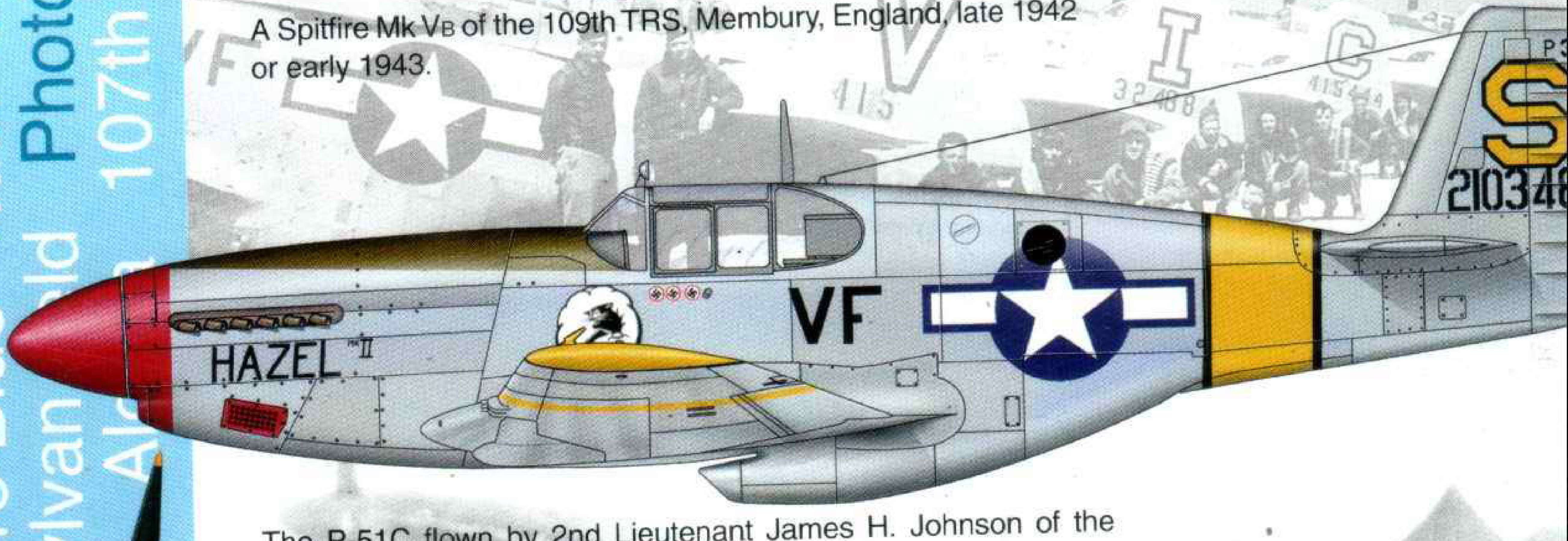
The Spitfire Mk Vc flown by Flying Officer James H. Montgomery, of the 4th FS, Corsica, early 1944. The letter 'J' is provisional.



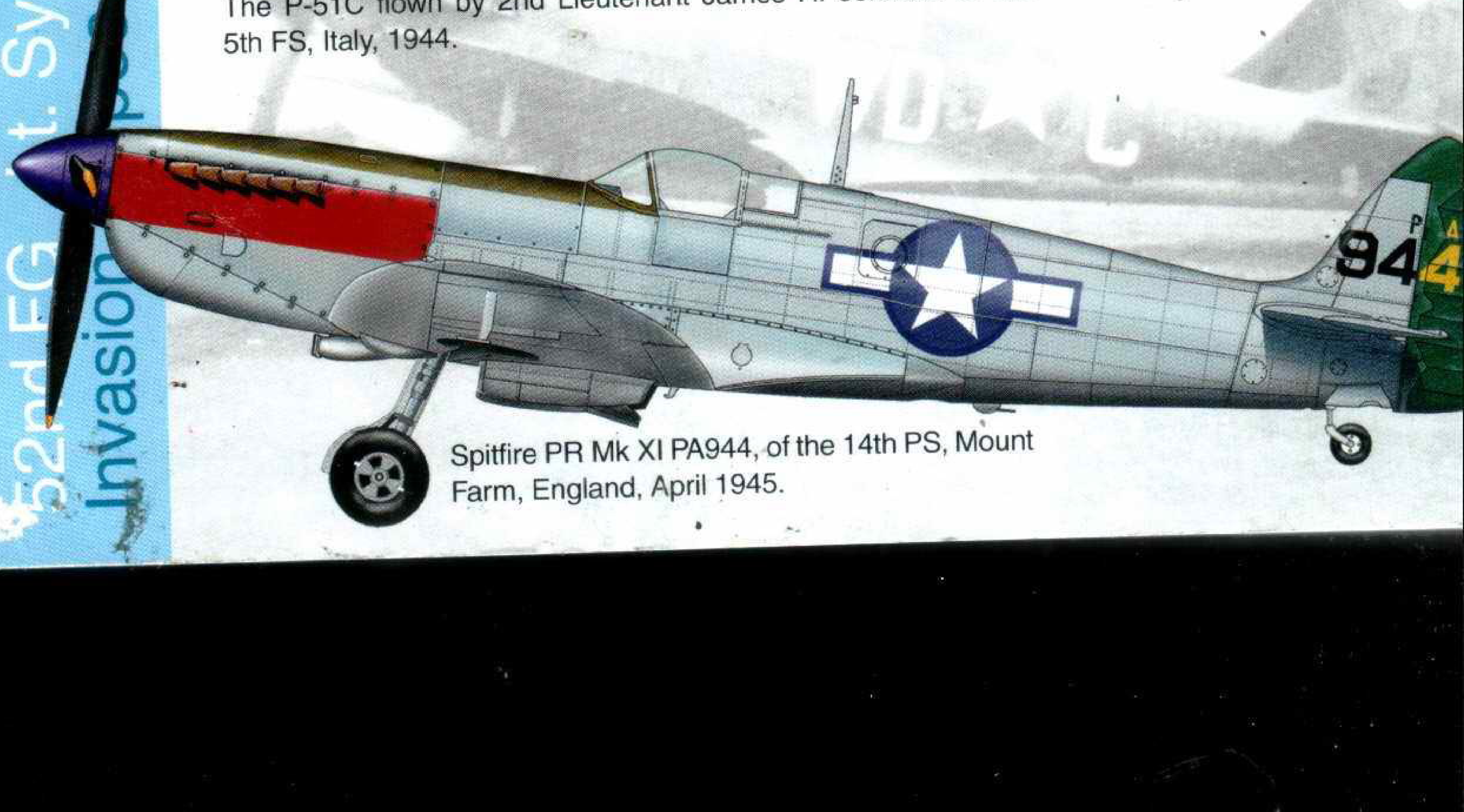
Major George V. Williams, leader of the 2nd FS in August 1943, flew this Spitfire Mk IX.



A Spitfire Mk Vb of the 109th TRS, Membury, England, late 1942 or early 1943.



The P-51C flown by 2nd Lieutenant James H. Johnson of the 5th FS, Italy, 1944.



Spitfire PR Mk XI PA944, of the 14th PS, Mount Farm, England, April 1945.